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FRANÇOIS-AUGUSTE RODIN



Photograph by Crevaux, S. Rue Vavin, Paris

PORTRAIT OF RODIN

PAINTED BY JACQUES BLANCHE

(By the kind permission of the artist)

FRANÇOIS
AUGUSTE
RODIN

BOSTON LAWTON, MA.



WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
MCMVIII



Photograph by Crete

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FRANÇOIS- AUGUSTE RODIN

BY

FREDERICK LAWTON, M.A.



WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

**NEW YORK
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PREFACE

THE following sketch, coming after my larger life of the celebrated French sculptor, published last year by Mr. Fisher Unwin, and the material gathered for that undertaking being nearly all obtained at first hand, either from conversations with the sculptor himself or from consultation of his friends and his correspondence, there is hardly anything to alter in the information thus obtained, and, so short a time having since elapsed, not very much to add to it. The present book, however, is neither a copy nor a mere abridgment. The subject has been treated afresh throughout, except where Rodin's *obiter dicta* or another's words have been quoted. The plan besides has been changed to suit the purpose now in view; some brief notes on the past of French statuary have been placed as an introduction, and everything has been brought up to date.

My larger book being primarily a biography—the first either in French or English that could claim to be so, out of the abundant literature existing on Rodin—a great number of facts were inserted which had

PREFACE

their utility in such a volume, but which are less necessary in this shorter sketch. Many of them, therefore, have been omitted here, and readers that may wish to inform themselves more fully are referred to the earlier publication.

As the present exposition is the result of further study and examination of the things spoken of, it is quite possible that here and there the emphasis may differ. Yet there is no fundamental change. I have nothing to retract. And even the attempt made in the conclusion to formulate some reservations, and to determine with more detail the kind of Rodin's excellence, should tend, in so far as it succeeds, to his being more thoroughly appreciated.

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NOTE.—For illustrations of many other pieces of sculpture, besides the above, mentioned in the following pages, readers are referred to my larger "*Life of Rodin*."

I

INTRODUCTORY

THE life and work of a great artist, as of any other great man, have their roots in the past. And, though art and literature are, in a manner, not limited by frontiers, yet it is the past of the race which determines the kind of excellence visible in them. Rodin may be Greek by his culture. He is Gothic by natural bent. And to-day the Gothic, in its essential features both of architecture and sculpture, is acknowledged to be a French creation perpetuated in the best national traditions of statuary. It may seem a paradox to connect with tradition a man whose whole artistic career has been a protest against the orthodox sculpture of his generation; but tradition is always double, one trend of it being that of fashion and imitation, the other that of consistently developed and ever renewed national genius. For a man to illustrate this latter is quite compatible with individuality.

As an introduction, therefore, to the following

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chapters, it will not be amiss to say a few words about the history of sculpture in France, including a few of the men that have made it. Like the rest of Europe, France received its statuary art from the East. Christian iconography primitively copied Greek statues to represent the various heroes of its faith ; but gave them, under the influence of the hierarchical spirit of Byzantium, a majestic immobility of carriage and expression that lasted, in France as elsewhere, until the sculptors of the thirteenth century, moved, perhaps, by the emotional preaching of the friars, began to put into each figure a familiar life corresponding to their own time. Long before this epoch, however, French sculpture, in so far as it was joined to architecture, had achieved great things. The Roman churches in the various provinces all show a striking independence in style and carving. Characteristic of Provence are magnificently decorated pediments and pillars ; of Poitou, façades as minutely chiselled as if they were ivory caskets ; of Normandy, a finely ordered geometry of lines.

After the birth, in the twelfth century, of the so-called Gothic arch—more properly, the ogival or sustaining arch, for such is the meaning of the term—which allowed of large windows being opened in buildings which were formerly almost entirely dark,

the play of light and shade on rounded surfaces became one of the chief preoccupations in sculpture. Thenceforward the Gothic carvers studied it constantly ; and to such good effect that, within the next hundred years, French monumental statuary and architecture had come to be paramount in Europe. At Chartres, Amiens, Reims there were thousands of figures, perfect of their kind, which were imitated in other countries by artists who had been to see and admire them. The naive realism of the thirteenth century grew bolder in the fourteenth and fifteenth, no doubt stimulated by the miracle and passion plays. The carvers of these early ages who have handed down to posterity such irrefutable proofs of their genius are nearly all of them anonymous. Only a name here and there survives. That which constitutes the value of their work is its faithful reproduction of what they saw around them, wrought with a personal conception which was strong because of their thorough knowledge of the art they practised.

If, before the sixteenth century, France had no artist comparable by his known achievement to Donatello and Ghiberti in Italy, although Michel Colombe in the fifteenth did some wonderful work, yet, on the other hand, it was the French Gothic, penetrating into Italy through the Cistercian monks, which inspired

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Benedetto Antelami and Nicolas Pisano, the first medieval Italian sculptors worthy of the name. And if, in the sixteenth century, Michael Angelo reached a supremacy in painting and the statuary art that no other artist of his epoch could dispute with him, yet the school of Fontainebleau, created by the Florentines, Primaticcio, Rosso, and Benvenuto Cellini, brought nothing into France that was superior to the mature production of Jean Goujon, Germain Pilon, and Jean Cousin.

The first of these latter, while to some degree influenced by Primaticcio, would seem to have studied rather at the feet of the Greeks, and to have learnt some of the secrets of Greek perfection. His famous *Diana*, preserved in the Louvre Museum, has, in common with Greek statuary, naturalness of pose, balance of movement, suppression of detail, and also long lines with severe form; but the inner power of his statue, controlled by soul that is revealed in look, attitude, and gesture, is his own, as likewise the freedom with which he treats the accessories of the composition. The same qualities of energy, measure, and skill characterise his *Abraham*, his *Evangelists*, and, in general, his bass-reliefs, which last form the greater portion of his work. He has been called the French Phidias, a comparison not warranted by facts. The

praise, however, suffices to show how much he has been and is still admired.

Germain Pilon lived about the same time as Goujon. His statuary has somewhat less character than that of his great contemporary; this, perhaps, is due to his admiration of Primaticcio. Like those of the Italian master, his figures have a studied elegance and grace which, when they are women's, go with a certain suavity and voluptuousness that grow into a mannerism. But, this notwithstanding, his chief piece of sculpture, the *Mausoleum of Guillaume du Bellay*, in the Mans Cathedral, is pure and original in style. His *Three Graces* at the Louvre and *Three Fates* at the Cluny Museum well illustrate his facility in transferring to marble the fugitive expressions of the body.

Of Jean Cousin less is known than of Goujon. He belonged to an age when biographical interest centred mainly in warriors and courtiers. His statue of *Philippe de Chabot*, now in the Louvre, was esteemed by Cicognara to be the greatest masterpiece of French sculpture in the sixteenth century. The figure, supple in spite of the armour encasing it, is worthy, both by its pose and the boldness of its execution, to be classed with those that have made Michael Angelo so universally celebrated.

Seventeenth-century sculptors, both in France and

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Italy, are generally credited with having exaggerated the picturesque in their statuary, endeavouring to make it reproduce elements previously considered as more proper to painting—to wit, movement, expression, sentiment, and the drama. Why these elements should be excluded, or why sculpture containing them should be considered inferior, critics have nothing else to allege than the characteristic repose of Greek statues. But this repose, natural in an age when physical beauty was a chief preoccupation in life, becomes unnatural in a totally different civilization, if made the sole standard of perfection. Such exaggeration as can be legitimately invoked against the execution of great artists in the seventeenth century, or again in the eighteenth, when it was the morbidezza of the modelling and the grace of outline that were attacked on the ground that they were attempts at embellishing the antique, can only be rightly made a reproach, if detracting from the aim of every true piece of statuary to represent life. The error of exaggeration lies not in the introduction of new elements, if these are in life, but in combining them so as to produce something that is not natural.

The Rubens of sculpture in the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV was Pierre Puget, whose fame has somewhat overshadowed that of his earlier contemporary, Jacques Sarazin. However, Sarazin's grace-



BUST OF BERNARD SHAW

(See pages 96 and 97)

ful and majestic *Caryatides*, in the courtyard of the Louvre, still stand out in fine relief on the Clock Pavilion to give us the illusion of women that breathe and move. Puget was at once architect, painter, and sculptor ; and he carved in wood as well as in stone. Among his numerous works, the *Hercules* and the *Milo of Crotona*, both at present in the Louvre, give the best idea of his capacity to endow carved marble with the illusion of warmth and colour. Himself possessed of a forceful character and imaginative though erratic mind, he gave to his creations a maximum of movement and expression. Just as Goujon's *Diana* is a woman of the sixteenth century, so *Hercules* belongs to Puget's own time. He is a Greek of Marseilles, not of Boeotian Thebes ; but, as a muscular man, he is perfect. *Milo* is this sculptor's masterpiece. The modelling is carried to the utmost degree of finish. The life of face and limb is intense ; and, above all, the working of the mind is indicated with rare energy. The only thing Puget wanted to make him equal to the greatest was that education which a knowledge and understanding of the antique would have given him.

Antoine Coysevox has been called the Van Dyck of sculpture. He connects the age of Louis XIV with that of Louis XV, the seventeenth and the eighteenth

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centuries, and is almost a modern. Thoroughly independent in the practice of his art, he impressed with his personality the statuary he executed for the King at Versailles and the busts for which he is most remarkable,—those of Lebrun and Bossuet being of the number. Two of his pupils became very celebrated, the brothers Coustou; Nicolas, who continued his master's work at Versailles and left also pieces of his work in Paris, notably the *Descent from the Cross* at Notre-Dame; and Guillaume, who was the better artist, though less popular. The younger brother's *Horses of Marly* are as perfect as one could wish; and his allegorical rendering of *The Ocean and the Mediterranean* is an exceedingly fine specimen of decorative sculpture.

The eighteenth century was fertile in good sculptors. Pigalle and Houdon stood out pre-eminent above the others, and, of the two, Jean-Baptiste Pigalle must be given the palm. Yet this chief among his brethren was a dull pupil. His fellow-students called him “the mule.” A residence in Italy awoke his genius. Thenceforward his progress was rapid. Like Rodin, he preferred the true to the merely beautiful; and, through clinging closely to nature, became in his day an innovator. All his works are of striking vigour, and contrast sharply with the lighter and more facile art pursued by most of his contemporaries. His masterpiece is held

to be *The Mausoleum of Marshal de Saxe* in St. Thomas's Church at Strasburg. The Louvre, however, has his powerfully executed *Milo of Crotona devoured by a lion*, and the Institute his nude statue of *Voltaire*. Houdon's fame, if exception is made of his *Ecorché*, reposes mainly on his busts of notable people, *Washington*, *Catherine II of Russia*, *Diderot*, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, *Mirabeau*, etc. Delicacy of modelling is remarkable in all his work. His *Ecorché*, showing the muscular system of a body without the skin, has been severely criticized by those who consider that statuary should deal only with ideal beauty. As a *tour de force* it is prodigious.

During the First Empire and the Early Restoration period, French sculpture, by reaction from the more individual and fanciful research of the preceding age, began to imitate the antique so servilely that originality was lost. Milhomme, Delaistre, Deseine, Moitte, and others constituted this neo-classical school, which for a while captivated public taste. Against the barrenness of the results obtained, a few, following the healthier tradition of independence, persisted in their own lines, David d'Angers, whose prolific execution is now well represented at the Louvre, as also in the high-relief of the *Pantheon Tympanum*, Pradier, and especially Rude.

James Pradier's talent delighted most in delineating

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the feminine form, which he made tender and voluptuous, yet ethereal. His intimate penetration appears not only in such pieces as his *Three Graces* at Versailles, which may be compared with those of Germain Pilon, but in his monumental statuary, for instance, the figures of *Strasburg* and *Lille* on the Place de la Concorde, the *Muses of Comedy* in the monument to Molière, to be seen in the Rue de Richelieu, the twelve marble *Victories* on the tomb of Napoleon, the four *Renowns* in bass-relief on the top of the Arc de Triomphe.

François Rude was, in the first half of the nineteenth century, what Rodin has been in the last fifty years—a sculptor apart. There is great analogy even between their lives. The parents of Rude were poor. His father was a pot-maker. He reached fame only after a twelve years' exile in Brussels, which city possesses some good examples of his work. Returning to Paris in 1827, at the age of forty-three, he produced a number of masterpieces distinguished by a profound science of modelling, and conceived by a mind familiar with all that the past could teach. One of them, *The Departure of the Volunteers*, adorns the Arc de Triomphe, on the side facing the Champs Elysées, and is the finest statuary on that monument. The antique costumes, however, are an anachronism.

Others of his productions exist in the Capital, notably his group of *The Baptism* in the Madeleine Church, a *Virgin* in the Church of St. Gervais, and, in the room called by his name at the Louvre, the bust of *La Pérouse* and the *Young Neapolitan Fisherman*.

During the later years of Rude's life, and in spite of his nobler achievement, statuary in general became as artificial as it had been under the First Empire. The men who inherited his sincerity and love of nature saw themselves neglected if not despised. Not even the genius of the animal sculptor, Barye—practically Rodin's only master—could lift him out of poverty; and Carpeaux, though freer from pecuniary embarrassment, attained only posthumous celebrity. The latter's group of *The Dance* on the façade of the Opera is full of natural grace and animation, as also his bass-reliefs on the Pavilion of Flora. Unfortunately an early death prevented him from maturing his talent.

The survival of art-classicism which does the most harm to-day in the domain of sculpture is the so-called theory of the Academic nude, which proposes a fixed proportion of each part of the human body to the whole and to each other, and condemns any deviation from it. Under such a rigid system even nature herself is put out of court; she has no right

to create more than one set of relations, more than one type of beauty. The student needs only to work by the lathe and with a dummy, all of whose dimensions are calculated to the fraction of an inch. In this way his success is assured. An attempt has been made to justify this orthodoxy by invoking the authority of the Greeks. The appeal tells rather against those that make it. Close students of the remains of Greek statuary find that it is far from exhibiting uniformity in proportions. The Greeks not only had no unique type of living body, but they deliberately took liberties with the models that sat to them. The fact is they discovered, at an early stage of their artistic development, that a blind copying even of nature would not yield an image or a picture that the eye could accept instead of truth. They saw that their imitation must be a free, an intelligent one, that, just as the painter increases or diminishes the tint of sky or leaf, in order to give the value required and its location in the landscape, so the sculptor must raise or depress his surfaces, boldly add and as boldly take away, respecting only the form as a whole entity, if he would create a figure giving the perfect illusion of a living body.

Writing on this subject, Camille Mauclair says : 'The idea of androgynous haunted the Greeks too

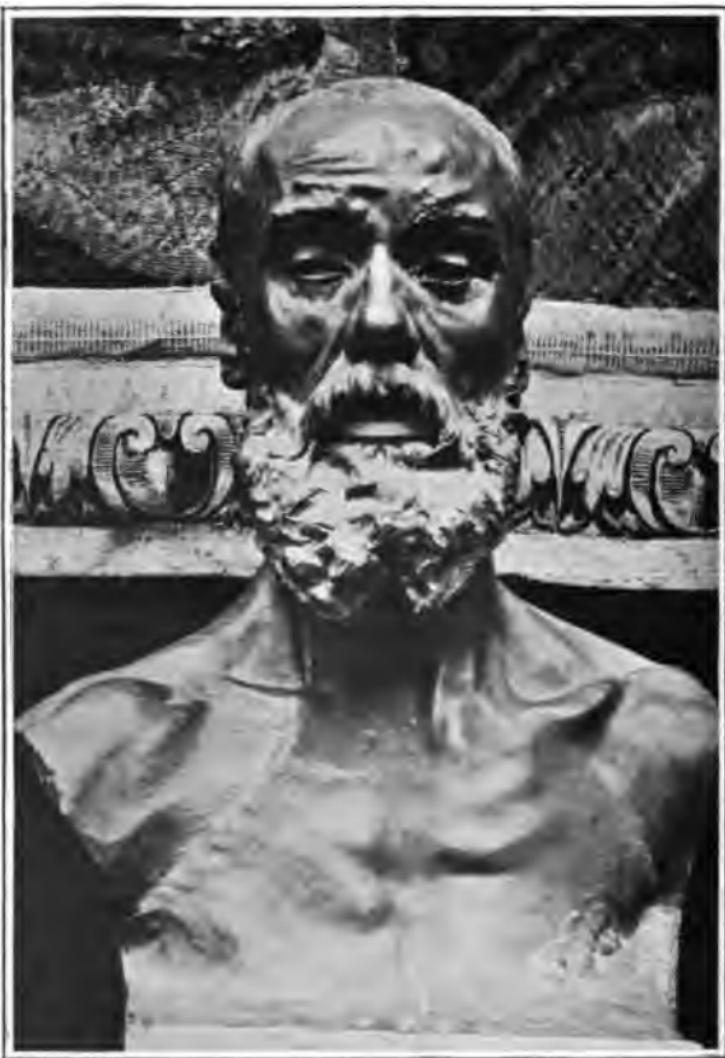
much for them not to have tried in most of their masculine effigies to mingle the characters of the two sexes, even to almost straining their anatomy. Many of their statues of adolescents (the Borghese hermaphrodite is the most celebrated attempt of the kind) testify to the development of the breast, a slenderness of the neck, a build of the hips and thighs that suggest the female body. The Greeks, in order to produce this effect, were not afraid to use the amplification of modelling which Rodin has rediscovered and revived to-day. They were admirable handcraftsmen, who made free with nature and rules.'

The same critic shows that the best Renaissance artists, both painters and sculptors, worked with similar freedom, and yet remained in reality faithful to the nature they had before them. He remarks that Botticelli paints his girls lithe, Correggio his blondes chubby; Rubens gives to his maidens a substantial milky complexion; Rembrandt makes his women amber-tinted; Goujon fashions tapering nymphs; Michael Angelo swells the muscles of his colossus; Fragonard and Boucher put on their canvas a plump, nervous Parisian dame; Houdon and Clodion represent their Parisian as pure or puerile, whereas Puget had previously revealed her sublime in grief; Degas depicts her awkward and sensual; Renoir unveils her as a

tropical flower, and Besnard as a pearl in human form. And all have expressed what is true. All have made mistakes of proportion ; but it is life which has dictated them and is responsible.

That Rodin has always acted similarly is abundantly evident from his practice. His own confession explains why.¹ ‘Everything can be obtained,’ he says, ‘if Nature is followed. In my early apprentice days, I had not thoroughly learnt my lesson ; and, in seeking subjects, I sometimes relied on my unaided imagination. But I came more and more to see how much analogy there was between all the forms that Nature begets ; and, thenceforth, I had only to observe them closely, to place myself, so to speak, in the midst of them, for like shapes to arrange themselves in my fancy and to make a harmonious whole. If others cannot do the same, it is because they regard only with a careless eye, and not with the intelligence. So many who begin to study dictate to Nature. If they have a man or woman model before them, they impose a preconceived attitude with no relation to the mind or actual intention of the subject. To-day, towards the end of my career, I still content myself with leaving my model to himself or herself. I dictate no poses.

¹ Conversations with the author. See *Life of Rodin*, by Fred. Lawton. Fisher Unwin, 1906.



BUST OF JEAN-PAUL LAURENS
(See pages 90 and 91)

At most, I venture to prolong them when I have found what I seek. The habit I have acquired of studying Nature without constraining her leads me nearly always to choose my models among persons who have never posed for other sculptors. If, perchance, I make an exception, I am sure to repent it. Any dictated attitude is for the nonce unnatural, and is worse than useless to the student. It is the finite substituted for the infinite, isolation and interruption of the secret law of our being ; the body loses its charm, and becomes absurd and ridiculous. Moreover, this habit of dictating to Nature blinds people to what is really contained in her life, which explains why so often I have been blamed for things affirmed to be unnatural in my sculpture. I reproduce only what I have seen, and what any one else could see, if they would take the trouble. But then, I am always looking, and I know there remains to be found out infinitely more than I shall ever have time to discover. One thing I have come to realize is that geometry is at the bottom of sentiment, or rather that each expression of a sentiment is made by a movement which geometry governs. Geometry, indeed, is everywhere present in Nature. Why, then, should it not be so in the raising of an arm, or another instinctive movement of a limb ? A woman combing her hair goes through

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a series of rhythmic movements which constitute a beautiful harmony—a grace of the highest order. The entire rhythm of the body is governed by law. The body cannot uncentre itself. It remains in union with all that composes it, and acts in conjunction with its environment.'

To sum up, then, Rodin's affinities with those of his artist forbears that in the past were the best exponents of Gothic tradition lie in their common independence of interpretation, their common effort to make statuary first and foremost expressive, and their common following of nature as the supreme guide. Such a method necessarily subordinates form to the spirit it embodies, and uses it as a means, not an end ; yet, far from being detrimental to the sculptural value of form, the method gives superior results, since form cannot yield a beauty that satisfies, except through its significance. By the same traits, Rodin and those who are his true descendants are diametrically opposed to academic artists, who make a fetish of form, and reproduce it with all the monotony of an idol.

That, from these like principles of action in the former, resemblances should be found in their work is only to be expected. If the various masterpieces just mentioned of Goujon, Pilon, Cousin, Puget, Pigalle, etc. are compared with Rodin's, one is struck by their

points of contact, which become more numerous in proportion as the distance in time between them lessens. Jealousy has even profited by this fact to hint that our sculptor imitates now Carpeaux, now Pigalle, now another. The insinuation is false. One has but to carry the comparison further to see that Rodin is as utterly distinct from his French predecessors as he is from the Greeks. He comprehends and assimilates them; but he copies only the nature that he has before his eyes. Not only does his form vary more widely than that of the men he resembles most; but to a greater degree than they he models his figures and poses them according to a dominating note in each. Indeed, each of his pieces is a fresh beginning, and thus escapes mannerism, a defect into which all artists are liable to fall, for example—the sculptors of the Italian Renaissance, who gave undue prominence to mythology in their statuary.

To add more here on the originality of Rodin's work would be to anticipate what can better be spoken of when all that composes the work has been set forth in order. Enough has already been said to make a sort of showman's background against which the subject of our study may stand out more clearly.

II

YOUTH

It would be interesting if, in addition to our sculptor's spiritual filiation with the past, we could find among his ancestors, near or remote, anything that might help to explain his artistic gifts. Perhaps one of them was among the carvers that wrought in the Gothic edifices of France and left their work, but not their names, for the instruction of their modern admiring disciples. This being so, the genius of the ancient craftsman may have slumbered through ages, to awaken, at last, in the distant descendant. Nothing, however, in our information warrants such an hypothesis.

François-Auguste Rodin was born in Paris on the 12th of November, 1840. His cradle was the old Latin quarter, with most of its antiquities still intact. During the past fifty years, new streets and improvements have made havoc there; and but little remains that a pre-Revolution Parisian, were he to come back, could recognize. The boy's father, who was of

Norman blood, was employed as a clerk in the offices of the Prefecture of the Seine ; his mother, whose maiden name was Marie Cheffer, came from Lorraine. The only other child was a daughter called Clotilde.

As his parents had but a small income, he received his first education in an elementary school near his home, which was situated in the Rue de l'Arbalète. When he was about nine years of age, they contrived to place him at a boarding-school kept by his uncle at Beauvais, a town famous for its cathedral, which has been styled the Parthenon of the Gothic. Here he stayed till he was fourteen. The days spent in this establishment were not altogether happy ones. For one thing, he had to put up with annoyances from some of the richer pupils ; and besides, as he was short-sighted, he was troubled, not being able to properly grasp much that was put on the blackboard, arithmetical operations in particular. Yet, in spite of these drawbacks, he learnt a great deal under his uncle's tuition, being docile, and having good powers of assimilation. Thrown back upon itself, his child's mind derived consolation and even strength from dreaming of future possibilities, though his reveries, as is often the case, were not literally prophetic. He dwelt with complaisance on the doctor's, the author's, the public orator's career—the last especially. Once

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his playmates, entering the schoolroom unexpectedly, found him discoursing to the empty benches. The dominant faculty was stirring within him, but without any self-consciousness.

At the end of his fourteenth year, his parents were obliged to take him away from school, and, since he had no inclination for business, his father asked him to choose some calling in which he might succeed. This was not easy. There was nothing precocious enough in the boy definitely to point out his future. The only indicative bent was a certain proficiency with his pencil acquired in the latter part of his stay at Beauvais. Drawing he liked the more as having some connection with architecture, which had begun to attract his attention ; and, besides, it seemed to fringe on the world of art and letters spread everywhere around him and creating an intoxicating atmosphere from which he received occasional breaths.

Ultimately it was decided that for a while he should attend a free drawing-school close to the School of Medicine, to-day bearing, without much to justify it, the more grandiloquent title of ‘Ecole des Arts décoratifs.’ This institution was then a sort of nursery to the National School of Fine Arts, and had at least one master, Lecoq de Boisbaudran, who possessed both a thorough knowledge of what should and

could be done with pencil and brush and a capacity for teaching it. Part of his system consisted in making his pupils study a subject in all its characteristic features and afterwards reproduce it from memory. Fashionable professors spoke slightly of the method ; but such artists as Fantin-Latour and Guillaume Régamey were formed by it. In the primitive days of its history the drawing-school, being free from official pressure, followed the traditions of the eighteenth century, and initiated its students into the warmth of expression and grace of design of the art of Louis XV and Louis XVI. Its most illustrious pupil has since remained faithful to the respect and worship then inculcated.

Two friends of Rodin, celebrated as artists—Alphonse Legros and Jules Dalou, the latter now dead—had, too, in the drawing-school an Alma Mater. The merits of both are appreciated in England. Indeed, Legros may be considered English, having lived forty years in London, where his teaching at South Kensington and his engravings and etchings have procured him a justly deserved reputation. As for Dalou, who was a pupil of Carpeaux, an eight years' exile in England after the Commune furnished him with ample opportunities for showing his sculptor's talent. One of his most important pieces of statuary

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executed during this period was his group of the late Queen Victoria's dead children at Windsor. In Paris his fine bass-relief at the Chamber of Deputies, representing the Assembly of the States-General, is something by which he will always be remembered.

It was during his attendance at Lecoq de Boisbaudran's morning classes that young Rodin first exercised his 'prentice hand on the clay which, later, obedient to his touch, was to assume such captivating forms. But none of these early attempts were accompanied by any sudden revelation. All they did was to confirm him in his taste for modelling. Of slow growth, his genius was still in the gestation stage, and his brain as yet comprehended but little of what was superior in the art he was destined to adorn. It allowed him even to laugh with his companions at Rude's statue of Marshal Ney standing at the junction of the Saint Michel and Montparnasse Boulevards, a monument which the criticism of that time decried. In after years he rendered his great predecessor justice.

He manifested, however, at this age one quality that played no small part in his subsequent career ; it was untiring perseverance in work. Every morning he was at the school from eight till twelve, occupied mostly at the sculptor's block. The second portion of the day saw him either at the Louvre, drawing from

the antique,¹ or at the National Library—then called the Imperial—where he copied engravings of the great Italian masters' productions. The evening also had its appointed tasks. He either frequented Saint-Geneviève's Library, or stayed at home and carefully redrew the sketches hastily made during the afternoon. Indeed, like many other poor students urged on by the desire to reach a far-off goal, he overstepped the limits of prudence in this youthful exuberance of effort, until at length repeated attacks of gastritis forced him to act with more regard for his health.

And now the season of expectation and illusion dawned upon him. The pinnacle of greatness loomed

¹ In maturer years Rodin came to believe that it is a mistake to give the antique to beginners. He says: ‘One ought to finish by the antique, not begin by it. When you want to teach any one to eat, you give him fresh aliments, so that he may learn to crush them. The idea would never occur to you of giving him already masticated food to try his teeth on. Well, when you want to teach any one sculpture, put him in direct contact with nature ; and, when he is well versed in nature, you may say to him : “Now here is what the antique was able to do.” And then the antique will be a source of new energy to him. On the other hand, if you give the antique to a beginner who has never grappled directly with nature, he will understand nothing about it, he will lose his own personality, and you will make a plagiarist of him ; and, instead of uttering his own prayer to nature, he will repeat to her the prayer of the antique without understanding its language ; and he will go on doing so all his life, and he will die an old scholar, but not a man.’ (The quotation is from an article by Rodin in the *Musée*. See my *Life of Rodin*. Fisher Unwin, 1906.)

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out in front, apparently not difficult to be climbed. His child's dream came back to him with more definite outlines. It was the first confidence of artistic development, fated, in his case, to undergo not a few rude shocks before its vaticinations were fulfilled. To begin with, there was his failure to enter the National School of Fine Arts.

It was quite natural the youth of seventeen should fancy, like the majority of his fellows, that the surest way to success lay through this official institution for the training of the country's budding painters, sculptors, engravers, and architects. The three refusals he encountered at the competitive examinations for entrance were partly due to his having no influence to back him, and partly to his submitting things conceived in the eighteenth-century style, which, if honoured at the drawing-school, were considered altogether inferior and out of date by the professional staff of the "Beaux Arts." For the delicate and psychological realism of this style to be understood and appreciated the lapse of another half-century was needed. Probably, too, somewhat of the qualities that were afterwards to distinguish our sculptor was already visible in the figures he chiselled in these trials, since they were admired by his rivals, if not by his examiners; and to-day the master has a kindly word for what the



MAN WITH THE BROKEN NOSE
(See pages 28 and 29)

apprentice hands then modelled. Would Rodin's career have been the same, had admission instead of rejection been his lot at this time? It is hard to say. What is sure is that the principles taught at the School of Fine Arts would have tended to lead him away from those that he has learnt to regard as supreme, from the execution that has rendered him illustrious. His friend Dalou, who passed through the State School, regretted the years spent there.

Feeling the necessity of further instruction, he sought it in a class that was held, under Barye's supervision, in the museum buildings of the Jardin des Plantes. The class-room was only a cellar, and the blocks were very primitive; but the pupils had both live animals and dead skeletons at their disposal, and a genius to inspire their hands. After Lecoq de Boisbaudran, Barye was, as already said, Rodin's only other teacher. From him he learnt not merely the technical skill that he subsequently showed in animal sculpture, though practising it seldom, but also that strong attachment to nature which is the vivifying atmosphere of his art.

Here it may be mentioned that among the influences which quickened the young artist's mind in these student years were those of music and old church architecture. In fact, they aroused in him

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emotions so overwhelming as to be a source of trouble, until he found out the secret of utilizing them as a permanent stimulant in his work. And in this work, all through, their presence is felt, the one controlling the structure, the other creating the harmony of the parts. To those who can best understand it, Rodin's statuary is an organism built to the breathing of music.

He had now reached the age when it was necessary to turn what he had acquired to account, and to earn his own livelihood. The twelve months he had passed under Barye, and a short experiment in the studio of a sculptor named Roubaud, convinced him that his best chance, as a beginner, lay in becoming an assistant to an ornamentist. The man who in France is called an ornamentist has especially to do with the modelling of all the carved portions of a building, outside or inside, except the statuary proper. Although nominally the servant of the architect, the ornamentist often becomes a colleague, suggesting this and altering that, in accordance with his own ideas. At the time Rodin took up with this profession, it had a good deal fallen into disrepute, and he was humiliated at having to enrol himself among its members. And yet not a little of his fine mature achievement was to be in the relief that he then considered as inferior. From the commencement he succeeded in it. His reproduction

of tree and plant and flower, while astonishingly real, were treated with an invention that delighted his employer. Moreover, he was quick to seize and appropriate, in his own way, qualities of excellence he saw in others. Chapman, a famous figurist of the middle of the nineteenth century, was one of those at whose feet he sat. Chapman's execution was quite in the Louis XV and Louis XVI tradition, and the disciple revelled in the suggestiveness of its manifold grace.

Of the years that succeeded and carried the youth into manhood there is not much to say beyond that they were filled with the same study, industry, and self-improvement that seem at no moment to have been relaxed. Evening classes replaced day classes now that the day was monopolized by bread-earning tasks. One painful occurrence, indeed, intervened and brought with it consequences that threatened to completely change the young ornamentist's future. When he was about twenty, his only sister Clotilde died. She was the elder, and had been his good genius; and he had repaid with an equally deep affection her almost maternal love and care. Acting on a mind over which the sensuous and mystic elements in religion had obtained considerable hold, the loss drove him to join for a while in a scheme formed by Father Aimard, a

priest, for the training of young men of artistic talent, with a view to their entering orders and devoting their attainments to the service of the Church. After a year with the good priest, the neophyte returned to his ordinary way of life ; and, to-day, Father Aimard's portrait in bronze alone survives to recall this episode.

On resuming his interrupted occupations, Rodin managed to secure a small studio for himself in the Rue de la Reine Blanche, near the Avenue des Gobelins. Here, in such leisure hours as his profession allowed, he toiled at various pieces of his own. They were busts, which he hoped would procure him admission to the *Salon*. On one he bestowed a couple of years' effort, only to lose by an unlucky accident the result of his labour. It was perhaps to console himself for this disappointment that he married, and gained the wife who has since been a faithful companion to him in all his fortunes. Within a twelvemonth from this event he had completed his first great work, known as *The Man with the Broken Nose*.

The original model was a man of Italian extraction, whose face, marred by debauch and misery, displayed notwithstanding something of a nobler bygone estate. Such a mixture and contrast appealed to the young sculptor. He set about transferring the likeness to his clay, with the sole preoccupation of fidelity to nature.

And so sure was his vision, so deft his fingers, that the portrait, when finished, was a masterpiece. Through simple truth closely followed in his representation, he had reached at a bound the standard and level that entitled his work to respect and admiration. The bust was sent in to the jury of the 1864 *Salon*; but was excluded by a majority that could not pardon a departure from the conventionally ideal treatment they patronized. It is possible even for artists by profession not to be able to tell a fine piece of sculpture from a bad one. In spite of the adverse judgment, Rodin was convinced of the merits of his production. He kept it through long years of waiting, at once a reminder and a prophecy; and, to-day, the *Homme au nez cassé* has an honoured place among his marble and bronze creations.

As previously the failure to enter the National School of Fine Arts, so now this rejection at the *Salon* was not without its compensation, coinciding, as it did, with an agreeable change, which made him a sculptor's assistant.

In the early sixties, one of the most popular masters in the modelling art was Carrier-Belleuse, a pupil of David d'Angers and a continuator, though with less merit, of Clodion. Albeit an exponent of eighteenth-century principles of sculpture, and possessed of much fanciful inventiveness, he lacked the thorough tech-

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nique that long and patient exercise alone can confer. The abundance of his execution both surprised and pleased the public of his own time; but this, in a measure, was due to the aid of subordinates, whom he chose with discrimination. Rodin was one of them.

The introduction was obtained through the great man's photographer. Being forthwith approved and installed in his new post, the assistant began the second phase of his serving others, which, with some interruptions, lasted for nearly twenty years.

A sculptor using marble, stone, or bronze as the medium of his artistic interpretation has a task of much greater complexity to perform than the painter, since it is practically impossible for him to transfer to these materials the forms he fashions without previously fixing them in clay that his fingers have moulded. Consequently, with but rare exceptions the transferring is mainly effected by subordinates. When the material, indeed, is bronze, the casting is necessarily left to others. For the stone or marble there are first rough-hewers, who reduce the shapeless block to an elementary semblance of its ultimate general outline. Afterwards, the fine-hewer, or *praticien*, by means of mathematically fixed points, is able, with his various instruments and measurements, to make an exact reproduction of the clay model, or plaster cast of it.

This latter operation grows more and more delicate as it proceeds ; and even when, as is often the case, the fine-hewing is entrusted to men whose skill is inferior only to that of their employer, the master-sculptor reserves for himself the last fine touches that stamp the statuary as his own.

Rodin was never a *praticien*. Neither for himself nor for others has he ever hewn stone or marble. He has always confined his fashioning to the clay, intervening in the fine-hewing merely to give the final corrections. For Carrier-Belleuse, therefore, he worked as a figurist proper, but yet also as a copyist, since he was, on the whole, bound to execute that sculptor's designs and to imitate the characteristic traits of his modelling.

During the six years following, he contributed an important share of the many pieces that issued from Carrier-Belleuse's studio. In one of the long rooms of the Louvre, once called the Salle de Rubens, some of the decoration in relief is by his hand ; and parts of the arms and feet in the *Hebe* of the Luxembourg were done by him. As the bigger number of the pieces he worked on were private commissions, it is impossible to study them together for the purpose of comparison. Judging, however, by such few productions of his as have been preserved from this period, and can be

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examined, it would seem that the incessant, forced imitation of another man's style did, for a while, react—and not for the better—upon his talent. Presumably he was conscious of this, since, his mind being always open and on the alert, he was always quick to perceive his defects and eager to remove them. Twice in the six years he temporarily quitted Carrier-Belleuse, tempted by the prospect of greater independence. The first departure was to join a former companion of his at the drawing-school, who, having gone back to live in Alsace, had obtained a commission to restore some of the churches in the neighbourhood of Strasburg, and had invited Rodin to come and help him. This companion possessed an extraordinary power of reproducing the Gothic carving of the Middle Ages, which power Rodin admired without being able to equal. The second departure was for Marseilles to help in the ornamentation of the Palace of Fine Arts there. Neither absence lasted long. Home-sickness soon caused him to abandon his Alsatian friend, and the Marseilles engagement was broken after a few months, when he found that Fourquet, the principal, was less tolerant than Carrier-Belleuse of any treatment of the modelling that was not in strict accordance with his.

The Franco-German war spared him from the



BUST OF M^{ME}. CLAUDEL (*LA PENSÉE*)
(See pages 89 and 90)

victims it made in all ranks and professions. He did his duty as a National Guard during the siege of Paris ; and then, when peace was signed, he started with the intention of proceeding to London, and of there earning the income which, for a time at least, it would be impossible for him to procure in the French capital. His wife stayed behind until he should have prepared another home. Instead of travelling direct to England, he made a detour by Brussels, wishing to call on Carrier-Belleuse, who had taken advantage of an invitation from the Belgian architect, Suys, to get away from Paris as soon as hostilities were declared, and was now occupied with the frieze on the lateral façades of the Brussels Exchange. The great man was glad to see his late assistant again, and persuaded him to resume the old relations. So Rodin renounced his intention of going to London, and remained in the Belgian capital, for the moment alone, waiting to see whether the new arrangement were likely to be permanent.

As a matter of fact, it did not hold out very long. A disagreement arose between employer and employee over some orders for statuettes that Rodin had ventured to accept on his own account, and they parted. Shortly after, as the Commune was over and Paris was reviving, Carrier-Belleuse preferred to abandon

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his uncompleted task at the Exchange and to return to France. The young sculptor's position at this time was an unenviable one. He was away from native land and family; his mother had died during his absence; he had no fixed position, no savings to fall back upon, no private income to help him. He must nevertheless keep himself and the wife he had left behind. The days were dark and desolate; it needed all his courage not to succumb.

Fortunately, the crisis did not last too long. Van Rasbourg, a Belgian who had worked with him in Paris, and had accompanied Carrier-Belleuse to Brussels, succeeded in obtaining the reversion of the Exchange contract, when the latter threw it up. Feeling that he could not finish the rest of the decoration by himself in such a way as to preserve the character of the whole, he asked Rodin to join him, virtually as his partner—a partner free to model as he thought fit, but not free to put his name to the parts that were his. Rodin welcomed the offer, the more so as Van Rasbourg was a man he could get on with. The two men established themselves at Ixelles, close to the city; and, in their studio, executed—Rodin doing most—important portions of the carving to be found not only in the Exchange, but also in the Palace of the Academies of Brussels, as well as in the monu-

ment raised at Antwerp to the memory of the Burgo-master, J. F. Loos.¹

The partnership enabled our sculptor to set up housekeeping again, and to fetch his wife to preside over his home. It was the inauguration of a more prosperous period. His public commission making him better known, orders began to reach him from amateurs that had visited the studio and discerned the merit of his work, as likewise from business houses selling *objets d'art*. Compared with his great creations of a later date, the majority of these productions can, of course, only count biographically. A few of the more important were exhibited in Brussels during the years he lived there, notably one of his doctor, a Monsieur Thiriart, and another of Jules Petit, a celebrated singer of that day. In 1875, a terra-cotta bust from his hand succeeded in forcing an entry into the Paris *Salon*, two years before the exhibition there of his second masterpiece. Moreover, two portraits of women, bearing the names Suzon and Dosia, had such a vogue in Belgium that thousands of copies of them were sold there.

This residence in Brussels was a fortunate thing for Rodin in more ways than one. In reality his own

¹ For further details of Rodin's work in Belgium, see my *Life of Rodin*. Fisher Unwin, 1896.

master, he soon got rid of the habit of imitation which necessity had imposed on him. He became himself, not consistently the best self, but yet striving towards it, and here and there attaining it, in some directions at least. He needed more experience still to acquire the difficult perfection he yearned for ; and his modelling, executed for an atmosphere sensibly different by its moistness from the Paris one, taught him facts about the action of light upon surfaces which were true revelations to him. He watched, at leisure, how his figures, when they were transferred to the stone, looked in all the varying tones lent by sun, weather, and sky ; and he learnt how to give them their maximum illusion of life.

On the domestic side also it was a gain for him to lead, for a while, the freer existence that his Ixelles abode afforded him. The memory of the Belgian cottage has remained green in the minds of both the sculptor and his wife, who, if ever they wish to give themselves a treat, take a trip to the haunts of yore, and once again wander in the magnificent woods that skirt the city. In their quiet little dwelling they spent some of their happiest days.

And then the money earned and saved enabled the sculptor to more freely indulge the hobby he had cultivated since boyhood, and still cultivates in the

autumn of his age, namely, the visiting of old towns where Gothic churches are found for the purpose of familiarizing himself with the beauties of their architecture and carving. Rodin is one of the very few who thoroughly understand and appreciate the Gothic. This hobby began to interest him more especially during his first engagement with Carrier-Belleuse in Paris. It had no doubt too been stimulated by the modelling he did for Biez, who restored much of the carving on the walls of Notre-Dame. He himself says : 'When I reached the age of twenty-six or twenty-seven, I began to rid myself of school-notions. I acquired more assurance. I dared to see with my own eyes. It was then I availed myself of every opportunity to visit the cathedrals. Even in the smallest town there is a cathedral. I awoke early in the morning, and hastened to see what there was. Those steeples, those cathedrals in the morning were a joy. I was happy ! I stayed walking round and round them till I was tired out.'¹

While in Belgium, it was easy to continue the series, comprising Rouen, Chartres, Reims, Lyons, Vienne, Aix, Nimes, and to visit Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent.

¹ Extract from an article by Rodin in the *North American Review* for February, 1905, "The Gothic in the Cathedrals and Churches of France."

The fresh instruction resulting from each new specimen that came under his notice helped to build up that science which is manifest in the Gothic group of his *The Citizens of Calais*.

The first journey he made to Italy was undertaken in 1875, also during his sojourn in Brussels. An accidental resemblance he had remarked between one of his own pieces and those of Michael Angelo, and of which he was unable to make out the exact cause, aroused in him a desire to study that master's sculpture in the home where it had been produced. He therefore started for Florence, and proceeded from there to Rome, Venice, and Naples. Among the things he learnt during this visit was to esteem Donatello as superior even to his great successor, by reason of his deeper originality. He learnt besides that, in Michael Angelo's statues, there was a simplification of the Greek rhythm of four lines, four volumes, and four planes made by a man when standing in a position of equilibrium, one sloping out from the shoulders, another coming back through the hips, a third sloping down and out again through the knees, and a fourth returning in a direction opposite the first and towards the feet. The Italian sculptor reduced the four-lined zig-zag \geq to a two-lined one $>$, obtaining broader surfaces, and consequently a stronger play of light and

shade. He would fain have found out more ; and, indeed, there was more to learn. It was the liberty practised by the Greeks, and afterwards by Michael Angelo, consisting in the exaggeration of certain parts and in a calculated deformation of the clay modelling, for the purpose of producing a more complete impression of reality.¹ This he discovered only after going back to Brussels and laboriously comparing all the poses assumable by the living body. All at once it struck him that, of the various changing outlines generated by muscular effort and relaxation, it was possible to obtain sculptural equivalents, giving the illusion of movement as well as of form, if his imitation of nature, instead of being a mere copy, was an intelligent, synthetic recomposition of the elements. In other words, for the marble and flesh to look the same they must not be the same ; there must be a difference of juxtaposition in surfaces if the mineral were to figure the animal. He was encouraged and emboldened in these investigations by facts occurring to his mind from the cognate arts. Did not the old Greek architects curve and bulge their columns so that in perspective they might appear perfectly vertical ? The sculptor, no less than the painter, ought to use his materials symbolically.

¹ See Introductory, chap. i.

These steps in the evolution of a man destined to accomplish so much in statuary it is useful to mention, at least cursorily. They illustrate his patience and perseverance, and go far to prove that these qualities, together with an infinite capacity for improvement, are one side of genius, whatever may be other.

Summing up what Rodin acquired during his seven years' exile, we may say that it was more profound culture and fuller power. From his studies of the old painters he had taken hints too. The canvases of Rembrandt especially, with their creation of form through chiaroscuro, urged him forward in his research of similar effects in his modelling. From books also he had gained much. They had become, during his daily walks, companions with whom he conversed—sometimes to the detriment of passers-by; by them his mind was quickened and ripened. Above all, there were reflection and the willingness to wait, which grew to be main factors in his evolution, and have since acted so constantly in his artistic life. To those who, in a friendly manner, reproached him with what seemed to them his neglect of opportunities, he replied that there was always time when one was sure of being able to do something. And it turned out that he was right.

III

PRIME

IN 1877, Rodin came back to Paris to live. It was the end of the long preparation which it had been his lot to undergo before appearing to the eyes of his fellow-countrymen and the world at large in his definitely acquired character of a consummate artist. Even now the recognition was not to be an ungrudging one, at any rate among many. In fact, all through the activity of his prime, when he was begetting a series of masterpieces that astonished beholders by their fine qualities, he had to contend against professional hostility, often unfairly displayed by artists and art critics. This great middle period may be said to extend to the foundation of the second French *Salon*, the National Society of Fine Arts, in 1890, and to comprise about thirteen years.

What decided the return was the achievement of a statue that the sculptor was intending to offer for exhibition at the Paris *Salon*. It had been conceived

after many attempts to embody other ideas, some of which, though put aside for the nonce, were to be taken up again later. One that has never been carried through was Joshua commanding the sun to stand still.

Rodin's love for woodland landscape, which his many solitary rambles in Belgian forests had increased, had often caused him to muse on the state of our earth when the human race was in the dawn of its intelligence. From these musings came the suggestion that he should select for representation one of our primitive ancestors, newly in possession of the physical and mental attributes distinguishing him from the lower animals and just awaking to the fuller consciousness they conferred. The model he secured was a young and well-favoured Belgian carpenter, the reproduction of whose nude proportions, in itself an admirable likeness, was made to carry with it a symbolism that whetted curiosity. The figure, as we see it, has the right arm aloft reposing on the head, while the left is bent with the forepart raised a little above the shoulder; the left hand once held a long staff, which was afterwards removed in order to allow a freer action of light on the surfaces of the statue. Rodin's science and expression are happily combined in the modelling, though perhaps with less power than in later pieces; and the pose has that simplicity which we notice in the purest productions of art.



MAN OF THE FIRST AGES

After being shown at the Brussels 'Cercle Artistique,' the *Age d'Airain*, as it was called, was brought to Paris in the spring of 1877. There it was submitted to the *Salon* judges and forthwith accepted. But now a strange thing happened. Apparently on the flimsiest grounds, some members of the *Salon* Jury accused the sculptor of having moulded his statue piece by piece on the living body. They had been informed of an insinuation to this effect which had been published in the *Etoile Belge*, and against which Rodin had indignantly protested. As a matter of fact, they were unaccustomed to see statuary so realistic, and they knew that moulding was sometimes resorted to by sculptors coveting a fame their unaided efforts could not win. In the case of Rodin, however, the charge was absurd, since it was easy for an unbiased person to trace the exaggeration and deformation of certain parts—slight as they were—which would not have been visible in a mechanical copy.

The victim of the accusation wrote to the Under-Secretary of State, Monsieur Edmond Turquet, and asked for an inquiry, which was ultimately granted; and, although the calumniators could adduce no proof, the judicial committee, influenced by their authority, worded their own report in such terms as to resemble the Scotch verdict 'Not proven.' Again the sculptor

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appealed to the Minister, demanding another and more searching investigation. He had casts and photographs taken of portions of a living body, so that they might be compared with his figure and the essential difference between moulding and modelling be evident. He requested that his Belgian model might be sent for and examined; but the accusers declined the proffered testimony. At length, accident effected what ought to have been the work of justice. One day, a pupil of the sculptor Paul Dubois came to the ornamentist's studio where Rodin was engaged on some figures of little children, without any living model at all before him. Amazed, he saw with what anatomical exactitude and life-likeness these figures were fashioned, and went and told his master. The master thereupon paid a visit to the studio in company with Chapuis. There the two, after watching, came to the conclusion that the man who could do what they had seen done had no need to mould limbs or trunk in order to bring the clay into their semblance. This opinion they conveyed to a number of their colleagues on the *Salon* Jury, and a collective letter was written to the Minister, which both cleared Rodin's honour and eulogized his talent. Cast in bronze, the *Man of the First Ages* was re-exhibited at the *Salon*, and was subsequently purchased by the State for the Luxembourg Museum.

Before the preceding incident was closed, nearly three years had elapsed. Although during its first stages the sculptor suffered both materially and morally, he nevertheless continued with ardour his double task of earning a livelihood and preparing his future fame. The decoration of the Trocadéro Palace for the 1878 Universal Exhibition furnished him with some temporary employment under a Monsieur Legrain ; and, when this was at an end, he worked for various commercial houses that needed designs to ornament porcelain, jewellery, or small *objets d'art*. Meanwhile, in the small studio that he now rented in a street recently renamed after one of his professional contemporaries, Falguière, he laboured at a new statue. It was the best way of replying to his detractors. Twelve months went by without his being able to do more than the head of it in bronzed plaster for the *Salon*, where it was accepted. In 1879, the entire figure was completed in plaster, and was exhibited under the title, *St. John Baptist*.¹

As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, Rodin has made it a rule never to impose an exact attitude upon his model, but to watch those that are voluntarily assumed, and to choose the one suiting his idea. This rule is not in much honour with the

¹ For illustration see p. 51.

majority of artists, who prefer correcting and altering the pose, thus doing violence to the nature of the person they have before them. On account of this practice, professional models are liable to acquire set attitudes, and frequently become useless to any one that seeks spontaneity. Rodin's *St. John* was an Italian who had never posed before. 'Raise your arm and begin to walk. There, now stop, and keep like that,' was the only order he received from the sculptor. The statue reproduces the unsophisticated gesture and gait with the movement, and each tension of muscle is as vividly displayed as the softer contours of the parts that bear no strain. It is instructive to compare the *Man of the First Ages* with the *St. John*. In the former, the physical proportions are all indicative of the plenitude of life under the influence of sense; in the latter, they as clearly connote the intellectual and moral side of existence. Again, in the former, the sculptor inclines to the Greek manner; in the latter, to the Gothic. The *St. John* is the greater statue of the two, since it gives us a more difficult subject successfully treated—the emanation of spiritual force. The presentation of the desert preacher according to Rodin's idea of him aroused some unfriendly criticism; but, this time, the admirers were sufficiently numerous and important to make their voices heard and respected.

Our sculptor's third masterpiece permanently established his reputation. Like the second, it was re-exhibited in bronze at the *Salon*, and was bought by the State for the Luxembourg Museum in 1884.

Among those to whom Rodin continued for a year or two longer to hire his services in a subordinate capacity was his old employer Carrier-Belleuse. But the relations between them were not the same as on the two previous occasions when they had been together. The elder knew the younger's worth too well to treat him at present otherwise than as an equal—a sort of junior partner—and showed his esteem in the most practical way possible by inviting him, in 1880, to become one of the staff of artists at the Sèvres National Porcelain Manufactory, where he himself had been appointed Director of the Decoration Department about a twelvemonth before. The speciality was new to Rodin; and, as it offered him an opportunity of gaining fresh experience, he welcomed the offer, the more so as his engagement, being for piece-work, did not necessitate his going to the Manufactory regularly. Both the style and the value of what he did during his connection with the establishment may be judged by any one that visits the Sèvres Museum, where several vases of his modelling are preserved. Monsieur Roger Marx, who possesses a fine collection of this Sèvres

work, has devoted long study to it, and his monograph on the subject deserves careful perusal.

After three years, Rodin resigned his post. In no case could his connection with the Manufactory have been more than a temporary one; but he might have stayed on the staff longer, if some of his fellow-artists there had not been guilty of acts of petty jealousy against him. Although his Sèvres decorative work was of high value,¹ it can only be considered as secondary to his larger statuary, in which lay his true vocation. This excursion, however, into another domain, this delicate beauty of the tiny figures that he designed on the surface of the porcelain, testify to the suppleness of his genius and to its range. While the engagement lasted, it furnished him with a pretext for reverting to his Brussels habit of long walks, which he took by the river bank or on its neighbouring heights, to return to his Paris home. These walks, often shared in by his wife, have their biographical significance, inasmuch as, during them, many of the ideas for the *Hell Gate* were conceived and sketched. Indeed, most of Rodin's sculpture has germinated in such communion with nature.

When he left the Sèvres Manufactory, he ceased all collaboration with other sculptors, and thenceforward

¹ Some of the vases were exhibited at the Musée Galliéra in June, 1907.

became his own master, disposing of all that he did in his own name. And the name, if not yet one to conjure with, as it is to-day, was already appreciated in the literary and artistic world. In spite of his retiring disposition, our sculptor found himself drawn into circles frequented by the celebrities of the time. His preference was, none the less, for a friend with whom he could converse on his favourite subjects, in the home of the one or the other. Such was his intercourse with the celebrated etcher, Bracquemond, and such also with Dalou and Legros, the latter of whom he stayed with in London in the year 1881—a visit memorable by its consequences, since it was the beginning of his relations with Henley, Robert Louis Stevenson, Sargent, Baden-Powell, the brother of the General, and Robert Browning, the son of the poet. In the same year, his *Man with the Broken Nose* was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery. From this date onward, Henley was a warm admirer of his, and set himself the task of explaining him to the English art-loving public. In England, as in France, there were many prejudices to be overcome, so that the task was not altogether easy. Still, it may be claimed that our country was not behind the sister one in learning to esteem Rodin's talent. Among his friends in France, the painters Besnard, Roll, and Carrière, and the

sculptor Baffier were led to seek his acquaintance from seeing his second and third masterpieces. Jules Desbois, chiefly celebrated by his decorative modelling, had met with him earlier, when both were helping Legrain, and later was proud to work for him in fine-hewing some of his statuary.

At the close of the seventies, the French Government threw open to competition a monument they intended to erect at the 'Rond Point' of Courbevoie in souvenir of the fighting that took place there during the siege of Paris. Rodin sent in a group entitled the *Genius of War*, and consisting of two figures—a soldier wounded to death, reclining against a pillar, and a winged half-nude woman hovering over the pillar and almost resting upon it. The telling contrast between the drooping figure of the warrior, symbolical of the defeated armies, and the soaring figure of the woman, despite her broken wing, gains by the closeness of the opposed attitudes. It is the first example we have of the sculptor's principle of grouping mathematically, a principle which he maintains is followed by nature in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms.¹ The

¹ 'Nature is the supreme architect. Everything is built in the finest equilibrium ; and everything, too, is enclosed in a triangle or a cube, or some modification of them. I have adopted this principle in building up my statuary, simplifying and restraining always in the organizing of the parts, so as to give the



SAINT JOHN BAPTIST
(See pages 45, 46, and 47)

successful candidate was Barrias, subsequently chosen for the execution of the monument to Victor Hugo on the square bearing that writer's name. Rodin's group was deemed too unconventional. It clashed with what critics were accustomed to.

The protest was still louder when, at the 1881 *Salon*, his *Creation of Man* showed an Adam with the head and one side of his frame bent and drawn so as to seem in conflict with the other. The statue looked incongruous and comic to their eyes. They did not relish this representation of an Adam painfully striving to govern the body and limbs he was yet but vaguely conscious of possessing as his own. Neither the freshness of the conception nor the puissance with which it

whole a greater unity. This does not prevent, it rather aids the execution, and renders the diversity and arrangement of the parts more rational as well as more seemly. Look at some of the groups begotten of the school that cares nothing for this truth to nature's architecture. The figures they make have parts that fly out in directions and at angles that have no rhyme nor reason, and frequently are false to the centre of gravity. The sculptor who ignores the teaching that is offered him in the composition of tree and flower and the crystal, who fancies he can do better than the plan by which the universe is raised from its elements, falls into the grossest error. His figures may surprise, but they will never satisfy the eye. He seeks variety, and fails to realise what endless diversity can be wrought within the strong bounds that nature imposes' (extracted from Rodin's conversation in my 'Life of Rodin.' Fisher Unwin, 1906, which see for the whole statement of the sculptor's opinion on this subject).

was materialized appealed to them. They saw merely that this sculptor had deserted the traditional so-called nobleness of pose. By their canons of taste it was inadmissible there should be contortions of marble or bronze. Perhaps not even Rodin's admirers have all understood this side of his art. It is too lightly assumed that his sculpture is nothing but 'torture and ecstasy, languishment and terror—all the primal passions of our race quivering on the surface.'¹ The simple truth is that, if Rodin sometimes gives contorted poses to his figures, it is because the human body, in sympathy with the mind, assumes them under the influence of passion; and the sculptor believes that no pose should be excluded from his representation of life, if such pose can reveal a characteristic idea or an essential emotion. One needs, however, but to pass in review the whole series of his creations to be convinced that pure grace and ideal beauty have their due recognition in them.

In the companion statue to the *Creation of Man*, which was executed about the same date though exhibited a year later, the conformity of the pose and modelling to a real, dominating motive is equally marked. It is the shrinking of her womanhood from

¹ Speech of Edmund Gosse at the dinner given in 1904 in honour of Rodin's election as President of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers.

the mysterious stirrings within her, anticipating the burden of maternity, that occurs to our minds, as we observe the exquisitely sweeping lines, appearing to quiver in the light, which constitute the body of *Eve*,¹ the mother of mankind. Not taking into account the *Genius of War*, this *Eve* was the first woman's life-size figure which the sculptor had placed before his countrymen. Perhaps, on account of its being possible to read into the introspective attitude the shame of the expulsion from Paradise, an idea familiar to professional critics, these latter forbore to renew the attacks they had made on its fellow. To tell the truth, its merits also escaped attention at the time ; nor were they discovered until two or three years after, when a marble reproduction was made of the bronze for a Parisian amateur Monsieur Henri Vever.

In 1882, Rodin received from the Government, through the medium of Monsieur Edmond Turquet, who, after the settlement of the *Age d'Airain* controversy, consistently befriended him,² the offer, which he accepted, of free premises in the Rue de l'Université, at the Repository of State Marble. A few other

¹ For illustration, see p. 162.

² When the Under-Secretary retired after seven or eight years of office, Rodin presented him with a bronze lion that he had modelled, wishing in this way to show his appreciation of the support he had received.

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artists, among them at present Jean-Paul Laurens, enjoy a similar privilege. The position is close to the Eiffel Tower, and is an excellent one both for its accessibility and its quietness, which accounts for the sculptor having ever since had his principal studio there, still, however, retaining a second one in some other part of the town, until his going into the country to live enabled him to find room within the precincts of his home for an ideally tranquil place to model in, when he wished to be protected against untoward disturbance.

There was, indeed, another reason which made this second studio thenceforward an absolute necessity. The tasks now undertaken and performed, albeit the financial returns could not yet be such as to liberate him altogether from monetary cares, were so important —it would hardly be too much to say so prodigious—that the embarrassment was where to obtain space to carry them out properly. There was Monsieur Turquet's commission for the vast *Epic of Hades*,¹ which became the continual preoccupation of the sculptor's future existence; there was the beginning of the series of busts,² still unclosed, which alone would suffice to send the maker's name down to remote posterity; there was the development of his drawing talent, and

¹ See chap. iv.

² See chap. vi.

the acquisition of new techniques¹ to be used in so remarkable a manner as a sort of raw material for his sculpture ; there were several pieces of work commenced, having a more or less public character ; and, last but not least, there were a number of voluntary creations elaborated amid manifold employments, each bearing witness to the extraordinary versatility as well as to the vigour of his imagination.

The visits to England continued at intervals during the greater part of the eighty decade, each serving to strengthen the esteem in which the sculptor was held in our country. The refusal of a contribution he sent to the Royal Academy in 1886 was a blunder of the committee, after apologized for, which proved that there were English judges of art quite as fallible as French ones. Towards the middle of the eighties, his reputation, crossing the Atlantic, brought him orders for two monuments to be erected in Chile, one to celebrate the civic virtues of Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna, a Chilian statesman, the other the martial qualities of Patricio Lynch, a Chilian admiral and general, both being of British descent. Two reduced models were designed and sent out to Chile ; but, for some cause that has never been cleared up, the matter fell through, and the models were not returned. A

¹ See chap. v.

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small bronze cast has been preserved of the General Lynch equestrian statue, and a photograph only of the Mackenna one. Happily, this disappointment and loss were compensated for by the execution of another monumental figure, commenced about the same date and completed in 1889, which was erected by public subscription at Damvilliers.

The man whom it was intended to honour had been a friend of Rodin's, one of those who had gathered round him after his return from Brussels. Celebrated during his all too brief career as a painter of landscapes and portraits remarkable by their truth to nature both in design and colour, Bastien Lepage had acquired a certain renown in England, where he had painted the portrait of the Prince of Wales. In his own country he is best remembered by *The Hay*, which was purchased by the State, and some other canvases such as *The Flower Girl*, *The Song of Spring*, and *The Handy Man*.

When the spectator first sees the counterfeit presentation that the sculptor gave of his friend, he is inclined to agree with those members of the committee appointed to choose one of the various rough models, who found it too naturalistic, especially in the garments ; and if he be of the number that would banish the familiar from statuary, he will probably be unable

to admire the figure. The real Bastien Lepage had a homely exterior ; he dressed in a homely way ; and Rodin, who stubbornly sticks to reality in his portraits, although that is not the whole account of the matter, could not and would not reproduce the externals otherwise. But there is the extreme energy of all the body, the fine poise of the head, the animated face, the alert eyes to set off the plainness of body, which serves as a foil. ‘I have represented Bastien Lepage,’ said Rodin, ‘starting in the morning through the dewy grass in search of landscapes. With his trained eye, he espies around him the effects of light on the groups of peasants.’ At any rate, such was the point of departure of the monument. As finished, the statue shows the artist, who is painting in the fields, comparing his picture with the scenery that furnishes it. Such was a most fitting and typical portrayal of one whose art poetized life amid the toils of husbandry. The *Bastien Lepage* does not rank so high as the bulk of our sculptor’s work, but it bears his hallmark.

As a separate chapter will be devoted to what by comparison may be called the greater pieces of monumental sculpture, no detailed notice need here be given of two—the *Claude Lorrain* and the *Citizens of Calais*—that were begun and in part finished contempor-

neously with the *Bastien Lepage*. The three groups were placed on view in plaster at the Georges Petit Gallery in the Great Exhibition year of 1889, together with no fewer than thirty-three other works. These latter comprised a *Bellona* in marble, a *Head of St. John Baptist*, *Galatea*, *Walkyrie*, the *Fall of a Saint into Hades*, the *Idyll*, a number of female satyrs, sirens and nymphs, *Perseus*, *St. George*, the *Billow*, the *Temptation*, the *Poet*, *Ugolino*, the *Thinker*, the *Danaïd*.

The last-mentioned, which has its place at present in the Luxembourg Museum, is one of the fifty fair daughters of Danäus, king of the Argives, who, by the advice of their father, all except one, stabbed their husbands on the bridal night, and were condemned in Hades to the vain task of pouring water into sieve-bottomed vessels which they could never fill. The marble *Danaïd*¹ has flung herself prostrate, tired and discouraged; and over the broken vessel fall the long tresses of her hair. Against the soft outlines of her young limbs rises the hard rock in jagged edge, with which she would gladly mingle if thus she could escape her fate. Into the flesh modelling of his female forms Rodin always puts a peculiar tenderness. One feels it is, so to speak, as the exercise of a sacred

¹ For illustration, see page 177.



PORTION OF HELL GATE

(See page 64 *et seq.*)

office that he approaches this side of his art, which is why each of his delineations of feminine grace has a warmth that is peculiarly affecting. The sorrow of the legendary Danaïd, because of it, seems to us that of a sister or a friend.

Notwithstanding the vast change brought about in his fortunes since his second masterpiece definitely ranked him among the foremost artists of his generation, Rodin continued to live all through the decade in a style hardly removed from that of a small-salaried employee. Each of the several flats he inhabited during this period, including the one in the Rue St. Jacques, where in 1883 his father died, was modest in dimensions and equally modest in furniture. To tell the truth, he could neither as yet save much nor afford to spend much in embellishing his home, on account of the outlays his profession demanded. The humble house, however, was no drawback to his being received in society, where, in fact, he was much sought after, without the attraction being mutual. He found it impossible to attune his mind to the artificiality of mere society rank or wealth; and those circles pleased him best in which the component elements were grouped by artistic or literary affinities. Such was the *salon* of Madame Liouville, wife of a doctor-deputy, and afterwards, by a second marriage, of Waldeck-

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Rousseau; such, too, the *Bon Cosaque Club*, which numbered among its members de Maupassant, Mallarmé, Becque, Roll, and others.

The de Goncourts were among the literary acquaintances of these days, and perhaps it was by them that Rodin's attention was first directed to Japanese art, of which he is an enthusiastic admirer. In Edmond de Goncourt's diary we meet with frequent references to the sculptor, some of them relating conversations, some throwing side-lights upon his personality and habits. It was in 1886 that the author of the diary was introduced by Bracquemond to Rodin in the latter's studio, where he found him occupied with one of his *Citizens of Calais*. He thought the appearance of the place odd, with its clay and its models including two dried-up cats. At a dinner given by Alphonse Daudet, where they subsequently came across each other again, the sculptor talked of his long days of toil uninterrupted but for a brief lunch, and of his being tired by so much standing on a ladder, when fashioning his larger pieces of statuary. In an entry dated the 26th of February, 1888, he writes: 'Rodin confesses to me that for the things he executes to satisfy him completely when they are finished, he needs them to be executed at first in their definitive size, since the details he puts in afterwards take from the

movement ; and it is only by considering these sketches in their natural size and during long months that he realizes the movement they have lost, movement which he restores by taking off the arms, etc., and putting them on again only when he has got back the dynamic energy and the lightsomeness of his figure.' Another entry made about a year later says : 'Mirbeau has much frequented Rodin. He has him at his house for a fortnight or a month. He tells me that this silent man becomes, in the presence of nature, a talker —a talker full of interest, a connoisseur of a heap of things which he has learnt by himself, and which range from theogonies to the processes of all the arts.'

In Mademoiselle Cladel's interesting *souvenirs* entitled *Rodin pris sur la Vie*, there is an interesting description, referable to somewhere about the middle of the decade, which may be put with Mirbeau's. She says : 'I often used to see him at our home in the country. On the Sunday he would arrive with that shy, almost awkward air which concealed his worth. He sat in the garden, with his head bent as if the better to drink in the conversation and the good air. To the others he listened quietly, manifesting rather an old-fashioned respect for talent, whosoever it might be. He replied by a few words or a keen yet mild look, and left without joining in the conversa-

tion, but having paid attention to everything and judged everything in silence. My father was of an ardent, expansive temperament, abandoning himself in an exciting discussion, and quite different from Rodin, whom he called the illustrious *ingénue*. As for those who met him there, they did not understand him ; his splendid animality puzzled them. Among these men of somewhat artificial stamp he seemed like a big dog, or rather forest quadruped, for ever on the alert, sensitive, quivering ; and they irreverently called him "Gaffer Rodin," a "curious old fellow." To tell the truth, I thought him so too, although I had remarked the life that shone in his eyes and his sly observing glance.'

The same Great Exhibition which suggested our sculptor's giving the public an opportunity of judging a representative collection of his work contributed indirectly to another event, in the world of art, that was not without its importance in his career. An International Committee was created, in 1889, for the purpose of awarding medals and certificates to artists whose exhibits were deemed worthy ; and, on account of its international character, the awards made to artists of French nationality differed to some extent from those of the ordinary *Salon* Jury for that year ; in other words, some old favourites were passed by,

and some new men, previously neglected, were the recipients of honours. This offended the members of the *Salon* Committee, who refused to sanction the decisions come to, and proceeded to declassify the awards as far as their own jurisdiction allowed. Rodin, Meissonier, Dalou, and Carolus Duran, who were on the International Committee, protested strongly against such a high-handed action; and, as their protest was not listened to, they seceded from the Society of French Artists, as the old *Salon* is called, and formed a new society under the title of the *Société Nationale des Beaux Arts*. This second *Salon* was intended to be a freer institution than the old one, and more open to the claims of talent. Meissonier was the first president; and, since the presidents of the various sections were *de officio* vice-presidents of the whole association, Rodin, who in 1893 was elected to the presidency of the sculpture section, replacing Dalou, became one of the official vice-presidents of the National Society of Fine Arts.

IV

THE EPIC OF HADES

VISITORS to the studio of the Rue de l'Université may see in the second room, which is the sculptor's sanctum, a huge door, in a proportionately vast frame, that rises from the ground to the lofty ceiling. It is the famous *Hell Gate*, which still stands in an apparently unfinished state, a quarter of a century after the date of its commencement. As a matter of fact, Rodin received the commission to execute this masterpiece in the year 1880, from Monsieur Turquet, who, by entrusting him with what was intended to be the entrance to the prospective Palace of the Decorative Arts, evidently wished to make him some amends for the unjust suspicion that had been cast upon him. That the victim so understood it would appear from the reply he made to the Minister, who asked him what sort of decoration he thought of putting on the door. 'I will cover it,' he said, 'with a lot of little figures, and then no one can accuse me of moulding from the living body.'

It is certain that Rodin's journey to Italy in 1875 had turned his attention to the history and literature as well as to the art of that country, and more especially to the periods immediately preceding and following the Renaissance. Dante he soon learned to know and appreciate in a translation; and, some time before there was any question of a *Door*, he had modelled a Ugolino, one of Dante's *dramatis personæ*. The commission given by the Secretary for State Affairs did no more than focus his ideas upon this subject of predilection.

The work was begun without delay, as a letter from Henley in 1881 sufficiently proves; and, at any rate so far as its parts are concerned, it was duly achieved. That these parts have never yet been definitely put together, and that the last touch has not up to now been added, is owing to two causes, one being that the Palace for which the *Door* was ordered has not yet been built, and that the State has not up to the present called for the delivery of the work. The other is that our sculptor has, in common with every true craftsman, the conviction that it is always possible to improve any work of art *ad infinitum*, and has not been able to resist trying fresh arrangements, both in structure and detailed pieces, since the opportunity was his to do so. Naturally, during the first years of the great task the temptation was to put too much into the space at his

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disposal. The theme was a sort of nebula whence new condensations unceasingly evolved, but without that final coherence and relative attraction which constitutes the permanent system.

In its general outlines, the *Door* or *Gate* consists of two leaves within an enveloping and projecting framework, the whole being surmounted by a pediment. Its height is six metres. The leaves and sides contain in bass-relief a representation of figures, single or grouped, in an atmosphere of Stygian vapour that forms the background. At first, there is a certain observance of the legendary *Inferno*, partly Virgilian, partly Dantesque. On the frieze below the architrave, the souls of the dead are seen to arrive in the ferryman's boat, and are forthwith judged by Rhadamanthus. On the left jamb of the door—for the story overflows its bounds—is a panel where we have a glimpse of the abode of those that died outside the Church's bosom; they are of each sex and every age—not even babes are wanting to the number. On the opposite panel are placed those that love sent to their doom, excluding them from bliss. The denizens of the panels on the leaves themselves are not exclusively of the type depicted by the Florentine poet. The sculptor's genius, beginning with old material, wrought it into figures that come nearer to our suffering humanity of to-day. The Hades wherein



THE KISS
(See page 72)

they dwell is rather that ambience of fate whose prison walls are thicker than all others, since they extend into the infinite, and whose tortures are all the more excruciating as being applied to heart-strings of a delicacy and sensibility much greater than those of Dante's generation. Nor is there any form lacking in which passion expresses its varied phases of mad desire, hungering anticipation, sickening anxiety, heartrending disappointment, and dull or frenzied despair. The figures writhe and turn and flee, yet meet within the confinement that holds them all in their common destiny; some even, in their wild attempts to escape it, clambering and clutching at the vast surrounding frame which seems to thrust them back again into the region of pain and quenchless sorrows.

With some faint resemblance to the Dantean circles, there is a progression in the phases of passion, the bottom portion of the door being filled with episodes exhibiting the material attraction of sex, whereas, in the middle and upper portions, the leitmotiv rises gradually from the physical to the spiritual. This gradation is indicated not only by mere outward signs of pose and movement, but by the nature of the modelling itself. There is a subtle accentuation of traits proper to each preponderant sentiment and thought. Rodin has not feared to lend to some of his *shades*

their maximum dislocation of ordinary posture, still without ever overpassing the limits of the real. What we see are the corporal manifestations of mental volcanic action, a sympathy of facial and bodily expression with the agitations of soul. In all the central parts, the relief is fuller than on the sides; yet the bordering portions have a delicacy of detail that reminds one of the sculptor's decorative work at Sèvres. Towards the top and under the cornice stretches a row of bodiless heads, vivid and individual. They are of varied type. Every nationality finds something of itself in them. They constitute a sort of commentary on the scenes below and assign to them a universal character.

The intensity of the composition as a whole is increased by the spectacle of three sinewy male figures standing on the pediment in positions of unstable equilibrium, and seeking to avoid their impending fall into the nether miseries by rendering each other a mutual support. Their faces are mirrors of nameless anxiety and fear, displayed also in the backward striving of stiffened legs and linked arms. They give a penumbra to the darker sights below. Above these, and seated on the crowning cross-beam, is another single figure leaning pensively forward and gazing downwards. His left arm hangs over the knee, and his right doubles from the thigh-supported elbow up to his lips, which

the fist presses. It is the personification of humanity —the age-weary humanity, with its old wonder and astonished questioning marked in indelible traces on feature and attitude. The presence of this *Contemplator*¹ dominating the entire drama gives it definite moral unity.

During the early days of the task, when its plan was being thought out, the sculptor's intention was to place the traditional first parents of mankind on the steps leading to the great gate; but the studio not being sufficiently high for the frame to be raised above the steps, his intention has ever since remained in abeyance. The accident had one happy consequence. It suggested the making of *Adam* and *Eve* into separate statues; and afterwards naturally came the enlarging of one and another figure or group that existed in bass-relief on the *Door*. A new series of masterpieces was thus begun. To this category belongs the *Contemplator*, *Penseur*, or *Thinker*, first executed, apart from the *Hell Gate*, in the eighties, but better known by the bronze of heroic size exhibited at the 1904 *Salon*. It is a reproduction of this, which was recently presented to the English nation by Mr. Ernest Beckett. The original now stands on the Place du Panthéon.

Among the subjects of the *Door* taken from Dante is

¹ For illustration, see page 170.

Ugolino, the tyrant of Pisa, who, falling at length into the power of his enemy, Roger of Ubaldini, was cast into prison with his children and there starved to death. Dante saw him in his *Inferno* preying on the head of his enemy. Already, before leaving Brussels, Rodin had modelled a *Ugolino Group*, but differing from Dante's vision and more like Carpeaux' admirable treatment of the same theme: the father was shown sitting in his prison, with a son on his knees and a grandson standing by him. This arrangement was ultimately rejected, and a second group of greater proportions than the first was elaborated, in which the father appears groping on his knees, amid his dying and dead offspring. One of the sculptor's aims has always been the research of undiscovered harmonies in pose, collective as well as individual. The *Ugolino* family, on account of the complexity of the aim to be realized, offered wide scope for experiment, which is perhaps why, up to the present, this piece of sculpture has been kept in the studio, like the *Hell Gate*, with the possibility of introducing into its figures some still more effective rhythm of line. And yet, looking at the gaunt form reduced from man's high estate to grovel on fours, while over and about him cling and twine and droop the tender scions of his house, it would be difficult to imagine an improvement. The ravaged

flesh of the sire, whose face is marked by the traces of a suffering which has finally sunk into semi-unconsciousness, and these wasted bodies of children that seek a vain support from their parent, harrow by their artistic simplicity void of the least exaggeration in gesture, and send the mind, as Rodin's works almost invariably do, right into the idea and emotion they symbolize.

Another Italian story immortalized by Dante, which has its plastic representation on the *Door*, is that of *Francesca and Paolo*. Francesca, who was given by her father, Guido da Polenta, in marriage to Lanciotto da Rimini, a man for whom she had no affection, yielded her heart to da Rimini's brother, who possessed all the physical and mental attractions that were lacking in her husband. Betrayed to the latter, the two lovers were slain by his hand. Dante saw them together in Hades and asked their history ; and Francesca said : ' We were one day for pastime reading about Lancelot and how love seized upon him ; we were alone and without suspicion. Several times the reading made us raise our eyes, and blanched our cheeks ; but there was one passage that was our ruin. When we read how this tender lover kissed a smile on the adored mouth, he who shall never leave me tremblingly kissed me on the mouth. The book and he that wrote it were responsible. That day we read no more.'

When the sculptor first detached this great group from its setting in order to reproduce it, he recreated it entirely. Leaving the enlargement of the original *Francesca and Paolo* for a later occasion, he took only the idea of two lovers embracing, and modelled in small size a piece of statuary known as the *Kiss*. The date was about 1886. Subsequently, he executed the same piece in much larger proportions, and exhibited it at the *Salon* in 1898, when the State bought it and placed it in the Luxembourg. The *Baiser* or *Kiss* is one of the most universally admired of Rodin's works. Even his most uncompromising adversaries joined in the chorus of praise that arose on its exquisite workmanship being displayed to the public. It was a signal refutation of the charge often made against the sculptor that he did not know how to attain to the Grecian grace. The fact is that, when the subject lends itself to this preoccupation, Rodin at once appears pre-eminent here as elsewhere. Everything in the *Baiser* is happily wrought—the man's protecting power manifested with such self-restraint and some timidity, and the woman's gentle gift of herself bestowed with such complete confidence.

Similar to the *Kiss* in conception, and differing only in the pose, is the group bearing the name of *Eternal Spring*, which, like its twin, was produced also in



ETERNAL SPRING
(By the kind permission of the Baron Von Lucius)

small size in the middle of the eighties. One copy of it was given to Robert Louis Stevenson, who, in writing from Bournemouth to acknowledge its receipt, said : 'The *Printemps* duly arrived, but with a broken arm ; so we left it, as we fled, to the care of a statue-doctor. I am expecting every day to get it ; and my cottage will soon be resplendent with it. I much regret about the dedication ; perhaps it won't be too late to add it when you come to see us ; at least, I hope so. The statue is for everybody ; the dedication is for me. The statue is a present, too beautiful a one even ; it is the friend's word which gives it me for good. I am so stupid that I have got mixed up and don't know where I am ; but you will understand me, I think.'¹ In this adaptation of love's young dream, the sculptor has intentionally contrasted the wondrously sweet curves of his kneeling woman, whose raised bust and arms are clasped by the man as he bends over her from his seat, with the rough, rocky background and floor from which she and her lover emerge. The man's left arm, stretched along the projecting, rugged marble, serves for a connecting link between stone and flesh. Rodin has a fondness for retaining in his work some of the raw material unchanged out of which he

¹ For the remainder of the letter, see my larger *Life of Rodin*. Fisher Unwin, 1906.

fashions it, since it becomes a canvas whereon he depicts his creations, with the chiaroscuro of light and shade infinitely graduated to replace the colour values. And it must be confessed that the result in this instance justifies the procedure. His marble of the *Eternal Spring* is absolutely dazzling. The best reproduction of this piece is the one executed for the Baron von Lucius, of the German Diplomatic Service, and photographed here. The block from which it is hewn is a marvel, and everything is finished with the finest effect. Our sculptor, explaining why he gave the title, tells us that the man's figure is the sun, the woman's the earth, which latter rises towards the sun-god as a flower in spring.

Just as in the general scheme of his *Hell Gate* he combines Christian and pagan legend, so in his search for individual themes he turns now to one, now to the other. No less happy in his selection from pagan legend, he took the *Danaïd*,¹ and then *Orpheus and Eurydice*. The latter, like his *Francesca and Paolo*, he modelled in two different ways. The first treatment is more traditional. It gives us the husband and wife standing on the verge of Hades, but still in its power, which sweeps up and round them in a huge mass of rough-hewn marble. *Orpheus* is in front, with face

¹ See chap. III.

hidden in his hand—for he feels Eurydice's clasp loosen, and realises that his imprudent backward glance has rendered all in vain. This group was sold to the late Mr. Yerkes, of the United States, and has never been reproduced. The second treatment discovers the wizard musician with his lyre, staggering and sinking under the burden of his sorrow. Even his instrument seems too heavy to carry. The bent, wavering knees are opposed to the lifted, aspiring arms and upturned face that seek a help from gods or elemental powers. And the help comes. It is Eurydice herself, or her spirit, that appears above and behind him hovering on the air. Her head approaches his ; and the bereaved husband would fain touch her and draw her down to his bosom, so as to assure himself by an embrace that it is no mere phantom which visits him. In both pieces there is that realization of human pathos through the modelling which in Rodin's grouped work is so conspicuous.

When looking at the sculptor's entire production, one is led to ask how much of it is directly or indirectly due to the *Hell Gate*. And the answer must be : a very considerable portion. Indeed, it is easy to understand how, with this *Epic of Hades* ever before his eyes, each and all of its imprisoned forms should mutely claim from the hand that put them there a

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liberation and a resurrection. Wonderful in itself, and more wonderful still by what it has begotten, this masterpiece continues to be at once the central inspiration and the touchstone of its maker's achievement.

V

DRY-POINT ENGRAVINGS AND DRAWINGS

MANY sculptors have attempted to distinguish themselves in the sister art of painting. That some can excel in it is proved by the examples of such masters as Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci, not to be invidious in quoting more modern names. On the other hand, there are sculptors that despise even drawing, deeming that their modelling has nothing to gain from its aid.

Rodin does not belong to either of these categories. He has never been a painter in the proper sense of the word ; but he has always cultivated the drawing art; and his accomplishment, in its branches that he has made his own, is as remarkable as his sculpture, bearing, in fact, to it somewhat the same relation as the painter's sketches bear to the finished pictures. It would not be altogether incorrect to call his drawings statuary in one and two dimensions instead of in three. Their tran-

scendent merit is the realization of so much out of so little. Like Paganini, who could draw the completest harmonies from one or two strings of his violin, Rodin, with a few touches of brush or pencil, can compel either a rapidly daubed contrast of colour or a few lineal curves to show the statuesque solidity of flesh.

Some light may be thrown on the genesis and development of these two kinds of drawing, which differ totally from anything the sculptor did prior to the eighties, by comparing them with his dry-point engravings, which date back for their beginnings to the first year of that decade. Dry-point engraving is easily confused with etching by the uninitiated. The two things, however, are quite distinct. Whereas the etcher graves on a thin wax layer spread over the copper, the dry-point artist designs on the copper itself. Nor are the difficulties of the latter the same. What he has to acquire is the skill to incise the copper surface with furrows of varying fineness and depth, and in sweeps or straights that go exactly where they are meant to go. There must be no rubbing out. The fingers that wield the graving tool should be infallible in each stroke.

Rodin was not long before becoming an adept in his new-found recreation, for it was as a recreation

that he commenced the study while on a visit to his friend Legros in London. Of the engravings he executed in the two or three years following and put away in his portfolios, a series of five is known, chiefly through their exhibition at the National Society of Fine Arts' *Salon*. In the earliest, a zodiac-girt, terrestrial *globe spun on its axis by Cupids*, and, in the next, a number of nude forms, male and female, the work has already the essential qualities of good dry-point, but yet savours of Legros' style. The third, a copy of his *Bellona* bust, is much freer; and the succeeding *Printemps*—a graceful woman's form with a bevy of babes hovering round the head—is quite independent and original. This one, and the fifth, a landscape in which a *Ronde* is danced by nude figures amidst a circle of onlookers, moreover exhibit effects of shading and expression that add to their charm. In the last, too, there is a marked statuesque appearance that hints of the sculptor's utilizing it in his modelling, at least for the purpose of comparison.

Another series was finished between 1884 and 1886, the more important plates consisting of elaborate companion portraits to the busts. *Victor Hugo*, *Henri Becque*, *Antonin Proust* are good examples. The first of these, existing in several poses, is peculiarly interesting, not only on account of the extraordinary

realism and the penetrating power of each stroke that make its intrinsic value, but also as furnishing contemporary evidence of the sculptor's experiments when he was engaged on the difficult task of reproducing the old bard's features. The profile of *Antonin Proust* looks very like a medallion, especially in the copies printed in warm sepia. The *Henri Becque*—a fine performance—is unique in presenting juxtaposed the front and two sides of the same head, with the variations proper to the three aspects under the changing angle. Here the sculptural preoccupation is paramount, and is analytical. It is the study of contours with their living mobility. Speaking of these three engravings, Roger Marx, who is an authority, says: 'Only a sculptor unique in his profession could have produced them. Rodin wields his point somewhat as if it were a chisel, and attacks the copper as if it were Carrara marble, his violence transforming itself into a caress when the finer, nearer, interlaced strokes succeed the stronger outlines and, guided in the direction of the modelling, trace each inflection of it. From the contrast and the cumulation of the incisions result engravings that reveal the artist's struggle with matter and divulge the peculiarities of the physiognomy. They are images transcendent by their vivacity and truth of relief, portraits in which the ray of light seems to penetrate



BUST OF MME. MORLA VICUNA
(See page 89)

into the chisellings of a bust and play in glittering reflections on the polished surface of the marble.'

What the dry-point engraving seems to have suggested to Rodin, almost from the moment of his taking it up, was a species of freehand that should belong entirely to his own art—that should neglect pictorial illusion and lend itself to that used in statuary; in other words, a species that should concern itself solely with the action of light on the planes of a statue. It is from this standpoint alone that the album published by Messrs. Goupil in 1897, and containing the most representative specimens of this auxiliary to sculpture, can be understood and appreciated. What the draughtsman tried to realize in his sketches was the fluidity of the human body ; he sought this in the body's motion rather than in its rest, which explains the rapidly traced lines and daubs denoting each impression on the eye as soon as it was made. As one passes in review the plates of the album, one is struck by the preponderance of painful subjects—figures of physical or mental suffering, in which shades of purple and sombre red hurtle and seem in sympathy with the interpretation. Their execution dates back to the period when Rodin was composing the bass-reliefs of his *Hell Gate*.

Among the coloured or surface-toned drawings that have become famous are *The Two Centaurs*, *Prometheus*

and the Oceanides, and *The Man with the Bull*. The last shows¹ ‘a giant form, half-man, half-monster, extended across a black firmament, in the upper portion of which faintly glimmers a thin crescent moon. The huge body, whose head and trunk are almost buried in the environing darkness, receives from the moon a beam that irradiates its right side, the brilliancy being greatest on the shoulder where the rays first impinge, and growing gradually less down the thigh and leg. One’s gaze is so fascinated by this phenomenal figure, which reclines between the horns of another crescent intersecting the entire oval of the picture, that it takes some time to perceive the bull to which the horns belong. Bathing in an obscurity slightly less than the background, the creature’s head and neck, which are all that come into focus, glint with a thousand vague reflections from the right horn and the illuminated portion of its rider. One eye, which has manifestly no lustre of its own, is touched by the borrowed light ; the other seems a black ball on the grey of the socket. Fantastic as the subject is in the highest degree, there is not a single mark of the pencil or a touch of the brush that does not prove the artist’s exact observation of the effects of light and shadow.’

¹ Extract from my larger *Life of Rodin*. Fisher Unwin, 1906.

It is only logical that in these sketches made for the purpose of registering all the fugitive rhythms of torso, and limb, and feature, the notation should finally be reduced to the most simple system. After the brush-drawings indicating statuesque modellings, come the outlines—or rather drawings in which everything is indicated by lines,—to-day as well known as the statuary, having been exhibited abroad no less than in France. They are the record of periodic studies carried on for years and yielding discoveries of surprising originality. Each lined figure is practically an instantaneous performance ; but is not a mere silhouette. Whipped strokes and curves, sparingly and judiciously applied, produce a perfect illusion of rounded bulk that many an artist would not obtain by laborious shading. Although made while the artist's eye was fixed on the living model and hardly regarded the paper, none of the lines fail in position or effect. What differentiates such forms from portraits proper is the vaguer and more shadowy delineation of those parts of the body which, for the nonce, are regarded as unessential. It is easy to distinguish in each sketch the portion on which the draughtsman's attention was concentrated—more generally between the throat and knee. Here it is a waist and hip, there a cambered chest, here the sweep of a torso, there the ripple of rib or undulation of

thigh. Many of the drawings, especially those that have been framed, are washed with a uniform tint of faint brown, yellow, or blue. The colour enhances the relief.

Apart from these strictly sculptural pencillings, Rodin has occasionally and exceptionally contributed illustrations to books written by or belonging to friends. Thus, for example, Emile Bergerat's *Enguerrande*, Octave Mirbeau's *Jardin des Supplices*, and Monsieur Paul Gallimard's copy of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* contain some of his designs. The last mentioned is a most striking series of infinitely varied execution, the treatment harmonizing with the themes, sinking into dim mistiness or rising into vivid prominence, according as the wail of pain accentuates or dulls its tones. Although the sculptor's philosophy is not that of the pessimist author, he has not unfrequently dipped into the latter's work, when seeking a fresh subject. Notably his *Lost Women* savours of its inspiration. And this contribution to the poems is both a recognition of indebtedness and an acknowledgment of sympathy with Baudelaire's poetic perception.

Candidly speaking, the drawings, while having—at any rate the majority—their own beauty, are not to be considered as distinct and separate art productions; nor are they all for the vulgar gaze. If preserved, as

it may be hoped they will be, their rôle in the future will be to explain by what means this master-craftsman was able to realize such truth and energy of artistic expression, and to explain it to those only who themselves are fitted and prepared to understand.

VI

PORTRAITS

THE sculptor may claim no less than the painter to be considered as *the* portraitist—to coin a word for the nonce ; nay, he has even a greater right, if he can succeed in transferring to marble or bronze all that may be read in a human countenance. For working, as he does, in three dimensions, it is possible for him to bring his illusion nearer to reality. True, he lacks the colour from which a painter derives so much help ; but, when he thoroughly knows how to use his clay, he can obtain with it all the values that colours yield. The story of the blind man who assigned to painting a superiority over sculpture, finding it the more wonderful to feel nothing where he was told the eye, the nose, the mouth were, must have been invented by a bad painter. A good one would rather have felt humiliated that his art should not be appreciated by the other senses.

Although it is not very correct, in writing of a

man who shows the same genius in producing a torso as he does in producing a face, to put one part of the body before another, one may say that, in his portraits, Rodin's pre-eminence is most evident, most incontestable. And it has always been so. From the early *Man with the Broken Nose* right down to the quite recent *Bernard Shaw*, our sculptor has consistently manifested the intuitive power of seizing on the lineaments of the person modelled that play of inner soul which gives them their individual character. This has been accomplished, too, without exaggeration. Not even for so great a celebrity as Victor Hugo would he consent to flatter. Théophile Gautier speaks of the struggle the sculptor had with the Hugo family, the latter wishing the three-story forehead of literature, and he wishing the truth.

It was a difficult task to get the sittings. Victor Hugo was very old. In fact, no regular sittings could be arranged. What Rodin did was to go to the house as an ordinary guest, and, as opportunities were afforded, to make pencil sketches from any and every vantage point. Quite a number of such drawings were done, which served both for the busts and for the statues that were executed after the poet's death. A letter to Henley tells more particularly how the work was managed. 'He has not—what is called—

posed,' writes Rodin. 'But I have lived with him, lunching, or driving, or frequenting his soirées for the last four months, with the bust at his house, which allowed me to work there always. Sometimes I was with him whole afternoons, but I did not have him as a model that one places as is most convenient for the purpose.'

Two men's busts, those of the celebrated painters *Puvis de Chavannes* and *Jean-Paul Laurens*, and two women's busts, those of *Madame Vicuña* and *Madoiselle Claudel*, are at present in the Luxembourg. They can hardly be said to give a complete idea of our sculptor's style in portraiture, since, when busts are under his hands, it has no limits. Each portrait seems to inspire him afresh; and, with his infinite curiosity as to nature's revelations, this is not astonishing. In contact with his subject, he suffers modification and change. Give him a sensuous beauty to depict, and his modelling shall be rich in morbidezza; a spiritual type, and his material shall grow transparent, the soul shall refine it. Let him have a *Hugo*, and the marble features shall become Olympian—was not the aged Hugo, in his way, a Jove?—or put before him a *Berthelot*, and every line and curve shall be intellectual, keen, polished, clear, and the bronze itself be the reflection of an all-embracing mind.



BUST OF ROCHEFORT
(See pages 93 and 94)

The *Madame Vicuña* is soft grace personified : the dreamy, languorous eyes half hidden beneath their lids, yet no less caressing, the nose pure in line but without severity, the mouth with ripe lips curving in tender reverie, the head with just that inclination sideways and backwards which lends it the greatest harmony of repose. Round the face, redolent of physical charm, sweeps a simple coiffure, and below, a band of unhewn marble forms a flower-pot from which this flower of another clime emerges.

To the portrait of *Mademoiselle Claudel*, who once worked as a pupil in Rodin's studio, and has since become a sculptor of merit, the name *La pensée*, or *Thought*, has been given, and with justness. Here is no undulating bosom and neck, as in the preceding bust. The head, even to the chin sunk in the stone from which it has been chiselled, the latter looking like a heavy woollen mantle wrapped round and round the body, is itself covered with a crimped cap that falls down to the ears, so that the features are all that appear. But these, although not handsome, are strangely attractive ; the mouth and chin firm almost to sternness, the large nose, the weighty brows, the thin cheeks, the drooping pose, all bespeak an experience and a reflection that have stirred depths unknown to the other. It is the face of .. woman who

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has suffered. We should not be wrong in calling it a modern sphinx. There is a questioning that touches eternity in the gaze.

Of the men-artist's likenesses the earlier was that of the painter of the *Death of Sainte-Geneviève* in the Pantheon. Jean-Paul Laurens was one of our sculptor's friends. He produced a fine portrait of him in the early eighties, and a second one, more freely treated, he put into one of the Pantheon frescoes. It was an exchange of courtesy between chisel and brush. In art the two men's ideas were not the same, but this did not prevent their rendering each other justice. While remaining in the *Salon* from which Rodin seceded, Laurens could say of the latter : 'He is of the race of those that walk alone, of those that are unceasingly attacked but whom nothing can hurt. His procession of marble and bronze creations will always suffice to defend him. He may rely on them.' Laurens' bust was first seen in public at the 1882 *Salon*. Like the *Man with the Broken Nose*, it has the savour of Greek statuary, a savour which was remarked at the time by English critics, one of whom praised it as 'a masterpiece of art, combining the most unflinching truth with an envelope of style that gives it Homeric dignity.' The bronze somewhat accentuates the calm detachment from mundane things which is the domi-

nant note in the physiognomy. It is the quiet of a mind turned in upon itself.

The bust of Chavannes,¹ also in bronze—the original marble is in the Amiens Museum—shows a more combative face. There is even a military carriage of the head, a military fixity of the lips and jaws beneath the beard and heavy moustache. And then there is the proud enthusiasm visible in every trait, a quickness and alertness capable of sudden unbending and yielding to an emotion of the moment. These tensions in visages, as in elastic, always imply the rebound. That which the portrait finely hints at, Rodin himself confirms in a few lines addressed to the art critic, Roger Marx, who had induced the French Government to purchase for the Luxembourg the painter's *Poor Fisherman*. 'I have seen Puvis de Chavannes; he called at the studio, joyous as a child to see my studies, which pleased me I can't tell you how much. But I don't think he would have chosen as well as you, with regard to his own exhibition, wishing, as he did, a museum-canvas, which has no meaning, whereas the *Poor Fisherman* is his very soul.'

Of *Madame Rodin* there are three busts extant, all dating at least a quarter of a century back. One is an adaptation to represent the French Republic under the

¹ For illustration, see p. 154.

face of Bellona. The other two are exact portraits, differing only in their presentation, the first being on a pedestal, and the second being in half-relief, with closed eyes, which gives it a somewhat spectral appearance on the background of rough marble that looks like a cloud. In both the essential details are seized with such fidelity that to-day a stranger would recognize the relationship between the image and the reality. In the days of her husband's struggles, Madame Rodin not infrequently added to her domestic functions those of studio-assistant in a matter which, though outside the modelling, a thing she knew nothing of, was yet most necessary to its success. While the clay is under the sculptor's hands, and may still be altered from day to day, it needs to be kept moist, a condition secured by draping it with wet cloths. To maintain just the proper degree of dampness requires both experience and nice judgment. This was the wife's task, and she performed it better than any one else.

Among the early portraits were *Legros'*, *Dalou's*, and *Henley's*. That of Robert Louis Stevenson ought to have been added to the number. The famous novelist was to have posed in Paris with Henley in May, 1884; but a dangerous illness intervened, and the lost opportunity was never found again. 'Since you made me live in bronze,' was Henley's way of

referring to his ‘counterfeit presentment.’ Nor was the saying a jest. It is the man as he was to himself which the bronze gives us, the man apart from the frame of circumstance.¹ Different are the portraits of Legros and Dalou. The frame is largely represented; the seriousness and intentness of the one, and the almost ascetic reserve of the other, one feels to be the history of the two artists writ upon their countenances as in their souls.

Visitors to the Montparnasse Cemetery may see two busts by Rodin over the tombs bearing the names of *Castagnary* and *Franck*, the former a journalist, critic, and politician, who, when Director of the Fine Arts Department, gave our sculptor the commission for his *Baiser*, the latter a celebrated musician. Each personality is abundantly depicted, with a chiselling fitted to an open-air atmosphere. The musician’s face, pensive, has a radiance of inner harmony beaming from it.

A remarkable instance of the degree to which Rodin is truthful in his art, even revealing what as a friend he would fain have concealed, is the portrait of *Rochefort*, the Marquis de Rochefort, that scion of the old nobility who for a number of years managed to persuade himself, and not a few besides, that he was a revolutionary, a communist, a democrat of the people,

¹ Henley’s bust by Rodin has been recently placed in Westminster Abbey.

and who has lived long enough to prove that his opposition to authority has never been more than an overweening desire for notoriety, and an incapacity for recognizing any superiority over himself. The cynical mouth, the restless, suspicious eyes, are the first things to strike the spectator; then the high, bulging forehead, the irregular development and curious poise of the head, suggesting lack of balance. The face is a puzzling one, the individuality no less so.

It is when gazing at such a bust as *Rochefort's* that one best seizes the significance of the sculptor's explanations about his modelling. 'In working on a bust, or in fact on any figure,' he says, 'I always carefully model by profiles, not from a merely front view. It gives depth and solidity, the volume, in fine, and its location in space. I do this, however, with a line that starts from one's own brain. I mean that I note the deviation of the head from the oval type. In one the forehead bulges out over the rest of the face, in another the lower jaw bulges out in contrast with the receding forehead. With this line of deviation established, I unite all the profiles, and thus get the lifelike form. Those who wish to penetrate into some of the invariable rules nature follows in composing, should observe her opposition of a flat to a round, the one being the foil of the other. They should notice also

her gradations and contrasts of light producing colour in the real object, and should be careful not to produce effects that are out of accordance with the natural ones. . . . On beginning their work, they should exaggerate characteristic features ; the exaggerations will get toned down fast enough later on. In the first instance, the exaggerations are necessary to establish the structural expression. It is only by the graduation of these more characteristic traits that the relative value of all the parts can be determined. In the flesh there is the spirit that magnifies one or another detail of expression. In the clay or marble it must be by the positive magnifying of the material part, not especially by size, but by the line, by the direction, the depth, the length of its curve, that the expression is made equivalent.'¹

Some of the preceding is very technical ; but it is worth while the profane's trying to understand, especially as the effects alluded to may be perceived, if not wholly yet in part, from the flat engraving or photograph. Rodin's busts are the most considerable portion, numerically speaking, of his entire achievement. Of late years quite a procession of English and American women of rank and fortune have come to the Rue de l'Université asking to be immortalized in bronze or in

¹ Extract from Rodin's Conversation. See my larger *Life of Rodin*.

marble. There may be fashion in the motive; but that is not all. These daughters of Eve realize that they are posing for one who can teach them something in the science of observation, through the art with which their lineaments are reproduced, for one who can carry them further than their self-knowledge. In France the portraits of his male friends and acquaintance stand in greatest prominence, with such artists among the number as *Falguière* and *Guillaume*, such *littérateurs* as *Henri Becque*, *Octave Mirbeau*, *Roger Marx*, *Gustave Geffroy*. The bust of *Mirbeau* is peculiar—a profile in high relief on a block of marble that surges round to the front of the face and softens what would otherwise be a hard contour—the latter characteristic of the physiognomy so placed. The head of the dramatist *Becque*, already mentioned in the drawings, has recently been enlarged for a prospective statue. Both the enlargement and the small plaster from which it was made are marked by striking vivacity, the idiosyncrasy of the writer.

The portrait of *Bernard Shaw* has already been alluded to. There are, in fact, two busts; and there is this curious thing about them, that they give us two personalities, one eminently familiar and expansive, the other more concentrated, reflective, and composed. Both are admirable likenesses; but, side by side, the

familiar, realistic physiognomy pleases most. This is not always so. In the *Salon* this year there were three busts of women. One—the portrait of *Lady Hunter*—had that radiant fluidity in all its details which distinguishes the *Madame Morla Vicuña* of the Luxembourg. The other two were more positively defined. In all three there was the same sure science as regards planes and profiles, and the same fine art in modelling; yet the results were of these two categories, and the ideal, in the latter instance, was the preferable. No doubt the effect is partly caused by the mood, the character—one or both—of the sitter, since Rodin registers all he sees, even the nervous constraint or the fixity of features, if there be such. Without the eyes, the peculiar tranquillity of the American Mr. *Pulitzer's* lineaments would tell us he is blind; and the subtle mark of race and nationality is on the marble face of Mr. *Wyndham*, the late Secretary for Ireland.

It is to be hoped that, sooner or later, the long series of these marble and bronze portraits will be collected for a brief period under one roof, and that the public may be offered an opportunity of judging them together. Thus united they would afford the most triumphant affirmation of their maker's supremacy in this crowning branch of sculpture.

VII

THREE GREAT MONUMENTAL STATUES

THESE are the *Claude Lorrain*, the *Citizens of Calais*, and the *Victor Hugo*. They are not the only public monuments that have come from Rodin's hand ; but, unlike the *Bastien Lepage* already spoken of, and the *Balzac* to which a separate chapter will be devoted, they either are or were originally composed of more than one figure ; and, of the sculptural groups, none are more peculiarly characteristic.

Monumental statuary is the supreme test of any sculptor's claim to be great. Over and above the qualities needed for modelling a single figure, it requires constructive ability united to imagination that an artist does not always possess. Indeed, judging by the frequently trivial, when not fantastic, arrangement of groups seen in public squares or gardens, the possession would appear to be rare. And even when the artist has it, small honour accrues to him, more often than



ONE OF THE CITIZENS OF CALAIS
(See page 106)

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not, from its exercise. Ignorant of the individuality and history embodied by the sculptor, the superficial spectator resents whatever he does not immediately understand. Rodin has had much to suffer from such unintelligent criticism of his monumental statuary. And the victories he has gained have been painful ones.

Claude Lorrain, or more properly Claude Gelée, the Lorrain, i.e. of Lorraine, was a celebrated painter, who was born of poor parents in 1600. He left his home at Chamagne, while still a small child, and went to join his brother at Friburg. From there his uncle took him at the age of twelve to Rome, where he mostly lived till his death in 1682. Even during his life his pictures were bought by kings and nobles. The Louvre to-day has some of them—the *Harbour at Sunrise*, the *Harbour at Sunset*, the *Village Festival*, and the *Campo Vaccino* are the best. What he chiefly delighted in was sunlight. He painted it under every aspect, on land and on sea; and always succeeded in putting into his atmospheres a pervading luminous vibration that they have preserved.

It was this pre-eminence of his that Rodin set himself to illustrate. He had been chosen in 1884 by the Nancy Committee—the monument was to be erected at Nancy, the capital of Lorraine. There were

twelve competitors that sent in rough models, Falguière among them. In the explanation accompanying that of the successful candidate, we read : 'The preoccupation in this project has been to personify, in the most tangible manner possible, the genius of the painter of light by means of a composition in harmony with the Louis XV style of the capital of Lorraine. In Claude Lorrain's face surrounded with air and light, it is proposed to express the painter's attentive admiration for the scenery amidst which he stands. The idea is that the statue itself should be in bronze, the socle, with its decorative group, in stone.'

The decorative group was an exceedingly beautiful representation of the Apollo myth.¹ Beneath the entablature the Sun-God and his horses issue from the rocky mass of the shaft that typifies night and gloom. Only the forequarters of the animals and the upper body and head of Apollo are visible. Black clouds envelop and hide the rest. One hand the god raises to thrust the whelming darkness from him ; and, with the other, he guides the onward-rushing steeds.

Apollo was the ideal. Above stood the real—the peasant artist at work, with hands and tools fronting an invisible picture, but eyes turned skywards to seize

¹ Compare the illustration of the companion Apollo of the Sarmiento statue, p. 131.

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the colouring he would fain transfer to his canvas. The sweep of earth beneath his feet tells of his being in the fields, where he loved to abide. Let the sculptor complete the description : ‘ My Claude Lorrain has found, and he is admiring what he always found, what he always admired, and what we find and admire in his pictures—a splendid sunrise. The broad orange light bathes his face, intoxicates his heart, provokes his hand armed with a palette, so that the good workman may be recognised in him. The resemblance I caught in this way. The best and only likeness we have of him is just Marchal’s face, the painter Marchal. This is a happy chance for me, and flattering to Marchal. So I have a living Claude Lorrain, instead of a sheet of paper more or less covered with black strokes. As regards the soul, the thought, the genius of Claude, I had his pictures, in which he has put the sun, and himself.’

In 1892, the monument was inaugurated by the President of the Republic, Monsieur Carnot. The majority of the Nancians were not pleased with it. The group below they considered too fine ; it dwarfed the figures above, they said. Claude they found too plebeian, and wanted Apollo in his place. Rodin had made their hero a man. They preferred a demi-god. Part of the discontent was mere pique. Rodin, being

tired, had refused to dine with some of the big-wigs of the town ; and they revenged themselves for the supposed slight by fostering an agitation. For the benefit of those that were sincere in their grumbling, Emile Gallé, a modern Bernard Palissy, recently dead, published in a local paper a brilliant defence of the sculptor and his work which silenced the detractors. He taught his fellows that there was a proper way to look at a statue, helped them to recognize the merits of this one both in structure and design, made them understand the relations of its two chief parts to each other, and showed them the advantage of an original over a purely conventional execution. In one respect Rodin yielded to popular opinion—and repented it. Because he had left the hindquarters of the horses in the clouds, he was reproached with not finishing them. So he freed and completed them further, thereby depriving them, as he afterwards perceived, of some of their pristine energy of movement. It was a lesson he did not forget.

The *Citizens of Calais* were those six men who, when the city was captured by Edward III in 1347, undertook to save the inhabitants from destruction by the sacrifice of their own lives. Foremost among them was Eustache Saint-Pierre, the old Mayor ; with him were the brothers Jacques and Pierre de Wissant,

and three others, Jean d'Aire, Jean de Fiennes, and Andrieux d'Andres. These, as Froissart relates, left the town gates for King Edward's camp, 'bareheaded, unshod, with halters round their necks, and the keys of town and castle in their hands.'

A little before the middle of last century, the Calaisians asked David d'Angers, celebrated for the pediment of the Pantheon due to his chisel, to commemorate by a monument this ancient deed of altruism ; but David died in 1856 without the thing being done. Clésinger was subsequently entrusted with the commission, and would probably have carried it through but for the Franco-German war, which upset everything. In 1884, the project was again taken in hand, and Rodin was invited to execute one typical figure—that of Eustache Saint-Pierre—for fifteen thousand francs, this amount being as much as had been collected.

The sculptor was delighted with the offer. The subject was exactly to his taste. Modelling a form for the sake of its inward beauty of spirit was just as dear to him as modelling a form for its outward beauty of line. His sculpture turned now to one, now to the other, now to both aims in the same statue ; it is this that so raises it above that of his contemporaries. But with one figure only he could not realize his idea. The six were to him an inseparable band animated by a

common thought, and each contributed something to the whole action. He must model the six or none at all. So he begged to be allowed to add the five others at his own expense; and his request was, of course, granted.

During the 1889 Exhibition, a plaster cast of the whole monument was put on view at the Georges Petit Gallery. It was a memorable spectacle. Never had Rodin dared so much, and never had he produced so magnificent a result. There they were, the devoted six, not in a theatrical or other artificial group, but just as they might have been and acted when walking forth to their death. Physically they were separated by difference of age, station, and circumstance; but morally they were united by the shadow of a common fate reflected in countenance, carriage, and gait. Apparently they were going haphazard, each in his own way and according to his own temperament; in reality the most careful art was displayed in the grouping, so that from every vantage point the six were visible without reciprocal interference. Both the modelling and the posing of the men were conceived and executed in the spirit of Gothic sculpture—great simplicity in accessories, great intensity in essentials. In his conversation, Rodin says: ‘The aim of the Gothic carvers was to fashion something that should



CITIZENS OF CALAIS (MONUMENT)

have its full meaning and produce its full effect only in the place where it was made to stand. They carved for the architecture, not for themselves. Right up on the cornices they modelled figures in one way ; and on windows, or porches, or arches in another ; and every piece of their work was exactly calculated to fit into the whole. This gave to their sculpture a more finely individual character, with little or no vainly personal mark.'¹

Beheld from the front, the *Citizens* compose an irregular double line—three before, three behind ; they are, in fact, three couples enclosed in an oblong or right-angled parallelogram, according to the sculptor's mathematic principle. The aged Mayor is in the centre. Bowed, broken, resigned, with hair and beard and arms lifeless, he personifies the sacrifice consummated even before death. One sees that the burden he bears is made up of years, physical privation, and the sorrow of a great surrender. He suffers, but without revolt. Against his tottering frame Fate can do no more. Gazing at him, one is reminded of Ecclesiastes' description : 'Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.' On his left a younger

¹ For more on the same subject, see chapter on Rodin's Conversation, p. 159, my *Life of Rodin*. Fisher Unwin, 1906.

man stands, though past his prime ; erect he, and undaunted, his shaven face revealing rigid lips and jaws, features of silent defiance. He carries the chained keys of the city—an unwilling bearer. The remaining four furnish contrasts of another kind. First, the brothers on the left, the one before, doubtless the elder, advising and comforting the one behind —the latter torn between his sense of duty and the ties of affection. The man at the back of the Mayor and the last one, behind the legal-looking individual, exhibit still greater emotion ; he in the middle raises his fingers to his eyes as if to remove from them a too painful vision, and he at the end, yielding altogether to his feelings, buries his face in his hands. There is, in reality, a regular progression of sentiment in the six, the degrees being characterized by pride, renunciation, pity, regret, yearning, despair ; and the couples bringing into contact pride and despair —the two extremes—then renunciation and yearning, then pity and regret. No other grouping could be more effective and no attitudes more poignant in their naïveté. Of course, as usual, the humanness of the tableau was not to every one's taste. As Rodin remarked, the malcontents wanted ‘gestures à la *Marseillaise*.’ This time, however, they were in a minority. The greater number had the common sense

to acknowledge that the sculptor was right in giving his *Citizens* hearts that beat for home as well as for country.

The monument was not erected until 1895. Rodin would have liked to place his *Bourgeois* on the top of a lofty pillar, increasing the size of the bronze figures by about one and a half. The funds did not allow of this. As the next best thing, he would rather they had been placed on the ground close to the everyday life of the city ; but here again his desire was not fulfilled. They were put on a low pedestal in the Richelieu Square, a site having nothing but the name as its recommendation. It is a pity the sculptor's preference could not have been gratified. The *Citizens*, being so perfect a specimen of the Gothic, would have shown, at this style always does in great size, to richer advantage.

The *Victor Hugo* monuments—there are two of them—are neither of them entirely finished. And yet they are not recent undertakings. They date back for their commencement to the '89 Exhibition. In fact, Rodin was unofficially approached on the matter only a year or two after the novelist-poet's death in 1885. The rough model of a statue intended to be erected in the Pantheon was duly submitted to the Monument Committee, and was by them stuck up for

criticism on a huge mass of cardboard rockwork which they had constructed for the purpose, whereas the sculptor had made it for a position much lower. The effect being different from what it would have been at the proper height, the pompous members of the Committee objected here and objected there, and finally asked Rodin to submit another model. This he consented to do; but Monsieur Larroumet, the head of the Fine Arts Department, disagreeing with the Committee and approving of what had been first modelled, asked the sculptor to go on with it, promising that a site should be selected for it, when finished, in the Luxembourg gardens. So Rodin found himself with two *Victor Hugo* monuments on hand instead of one.

From engravings made at the time of this original rough model—one of which may be seen as a frontispiece in a book published by Monsieur Larroumet in 1894 on Victor Hugo's residence in Guernsey—the poet is seen to have been represented in a sitting posture and clothed, with his right elbow supported against a background in the block, and the hand of the same arm pressing his forehead. Both body and head lean forward a little, and the left arm hangs limply, the whole attitude being one of reflection. The principal garment was a loose coat, and a sort of shawl draped the knees and legs. Forming a canopy over his head

and left side, three Muses reclined. The first, sinuously graceful and posing languorously, personified the bard's *Oriental Poems*; the second, whose face was convulsed with wrath, personified the *Ghastisements*; and the third, nervous, caressing yet noble, personified the *Romantic Drama*. Since this group was now to be placed out of and not indoors, Rodin altered it so as to be more suited to its environment of verdure.

As modified, the bard, carved in heroic proportions, appears half-sitting, half-lying. A mantle that covered him has fallen from his shoulders, leaving the upper part of the body bare; the legs, too, are partly uncovered. The pose is much the same as in the original model. The changes, resulting from the increased inclination, have turned the head to a more attentive listening and raised the left arm and hand in a gesture of command. The poet's couch is on a cliff of the Norman isle where he spent his years of exile; and his face, streaked with years, and heavy with memory, is a wonderful comment on such a confession as that of the *Twenty-sixth Song of Twilight*:—

Past are those moments.—Happy now,
Whoso may touch me on the brow ;
Within I am with sadness wrung ;
A noxious guest is in my hall ;
I am the turret fine and tall
Wherein the sombre bell is hung.

Shadow has in my bosom spread ;
 And, 'neath my proud successes bred,
 Inside my dwelling sorrow weeps.
 A worm devours my grapes at will,
 And thunders rumble, murmuring still,
 Behind my vague horizon's deeps.

Hope leads to doors that have no key.
 This earth is full of things that we
 From but their darker side behold.
 Fate on our wishes sets its heel,
 And life is like a chariot-wheel
 In dust and cloud for ever rolled.

And as the years and as the hours,
 Paler and crowned with fewer flowers,
 Pass over me from heaven's door,
 I see my visions flit away,
 Like butterflies that live a day
 And have no hive nor honey's store.

Vainly within my breast I blow
 The fire of love supreme, but low,
 That burns on other altars sweet,
 My bosom's flame, at every stroke,
 Amid the azure dies in smoke
 Or falls in ashes at my feet.

My star is hid behind the wrack.
 The rose has nevermore come back
 Upon my sombre bough to light.
 Dregs form the bottom of the bowl,
 And madness ends the dream of soul ;
 After the morning is the night.

In the new composition, two accompanying figures, instead of three, were modelled, subsidiary to the chief theme. As the group was first composed, an



VICTOR HUGO (MONUMENT)

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angel of wrath knelt behind and aloft, bending with extended arms over the poet's head. A modern Clio, voicing the cry of martyred humanity, she called for vengeance and redress. The second figure, also behind, stood with raised hands partly concealing her face. Half-turning towards the bard in a suppliant attitude, she whispered, as the Muse of the Idyll, a gentle message of peace and love. Quite recently Rodin has decided to suppress these two supplementary figures, and, now that the statue is about to be placed in the garden of the Luxembourg, to leave it quite alone. His reason for the decision is that the monument is, in reality, complete with the single figure executed in heroic size reposing on the huge block ; and this no one will be likely to gainsay.

The second monument—the one destined to adorn the Pantheon—was begun in 1892. Being a group and the conception rather more complex, it has been kept, until the present, unfinished in some of its parts, presumably with the intention of altering details. Here the poet is seen walking beneath a sea cliff also in the isle of his banishment. His feet are entangled in a rough undergrowth ; and, with his arms stretched out before him, he gropes his way along. Below, at the edge of the waves, cling three ocean sirens. Two are looking up at the perplexed and harassed pilgrim,

while the third gazes in the Lethean billows. They tempt him to abandon the struggle and to take refuge in oblivion. But, above, there is Iris, the heavenly messenger, with widespread wings that veil her nudity. She is represented in downward, arrested flight, and hovering over him that she has been sent to guide. Compact in structure, in spite of its complexity, this group fascinates, not only by the forceful modelling of each personage, but by the contrast of attitudes and the conflict of tones. It is not sentimentalism—Rodin's statuary is never that—but a striking dramatic situation.

Indeed, all three monuments reveal the dramatic side of our sculptor's talent. They are full of action, have abundant interest of passion, plot, and character, and hint that the artist has a bias towards tragedy, an indication confirmed by the bulk of his achievement. If they do not sum up his monumental sculpture, they at least may be considered as its high-water mark. It would be difficult to surpass the *Citizens* or the *Victor Hugo*.

VIII

THE BALZAC STATUE

THE Balzac statue, at the time of its exhibition, occasioned a controversy almost as bitterly sustained as that caused by the Dreyfus affair. Common opinion asserted that the statue was a monstrosity, while an influential minority of people held that it was a great masterpiece. Our sculptor, who spent years in its making, has always defended this work. To-day as then, he regards it as an integral part of his achievement. In order to give the reader an opportunity of forming a fair judgment on the matter, it will be better to tell the story from its beginning.

Rodin was not the artist primitively selected for the task. The author of the *Comédie Humaine* died in the year 1850. During the decade of the eighties, a movement was set on foot by the 'Men of Letters Society' to erect a statue to this greatest of French novelists, and thirty-six thousand francs were collected for the purpose. The Committee's choice fell on

Chapu, mostly known by his *Jeanne Darc at Domrémy* and his *Mercury inventing the Caduceus*, both purchased by the State. In 1891, three years after the work was given to him, Chapu died, leaving his Balzac in quite an elementary stage of execution; and Rodin, urged by some friends of his who were on the Committee, applied for the commission, promising, if entrusted with it, to complete the statue within eighteen months. This promise was added, since the Committee had already waited so long; and he was advised that an engagement of the kind was necessary. By a vote of twelve to eight his offer was accepted; and, receiving as earnest money ten thousand francs out of the thirty-six thousand that remained in hand, he set about the undertaking.

There can be no doubt that he was perfectly sincere in pledging himself to complete the statue within the time he had mentioned. Just then his two great monuments, the *Claude Lorrain* and the *Citizens of Calais*, were practically finished, and no obstacle seemed to stand in his way. Besides, he hoped to be able to utilize Chapu's rough model. In it, Balzac was shown seated, with a woman and a boy at his side. However, when he came to examine more closely what had been done, he found that he could not accept it, and that a fresh start would have to be made.

Failing the real Balzac to sit to him, Rodin spared no pains to obtain the best substitutes possible. The only materials ready to hand were a bust—not a very good one—modelled from life by David d'Angers, and a half-length daguerreotype portrait. To procure others he went down into Touraine, where the novelist had lived ; reconstituted the existence he had led there ; made inquiries from people who had known him ; read his books through again ; even had a suit of clothes made by an old tailor who had fitted Balzac with garments occasionally and had kept the measures ; and, last of all, endeavoured to discover an individual whose build and style sufficiently resembled those of his subject to serve as a model for the body. The labour entailed by these investigations was very considerable ; and the further he went with them the more he realized that, if he was to succeed in setting up a statue worthy of the original, and corresponding to the idea that was dawning upon him, it would only be after much patient experiment.

The exterior of the man was as extraordinary as his character. Lamartine thus describes him : ‘It was the face of an element ; big head, hair dishevelled over his collar and cheeks, like a mane which the scissors never clipped ; very obtuse ; eye of flame ; colossal body. He was big, thick, square at the base and

shoulders, much of the ampleness of Mirabeau, but no heaviness. There was so much soul that it carried the whole lightly ; the weight seemed to give him force, not to take it away from him ; his short arms gesticulated with ease.'

This description the sculptor took as his guide. He would model a figure reproducing both outward and inward traits ; and would represent the novelist walking, not sitting, clad in the dressing-gown worn by him when engaged in writing and in thinking out the plan of one of his books. The dressing-gown he adopted with the greater willingness as it furnished him with an opportunity to be even more Gothic in this new statue than he had been in his *Citizens of Calais*. While fashioning a garment that should not hide the body's shape, posture, and balance, he would give to it the loosest, broadest, simplest folds possible, and make it a foil to the head and face seething with imaginative thought.

Notwithstanding that the body was to be entirely draped, he began by building it in the nude ;¹ and put the gown on it piece by piece. Several models he executed so, in varying pose, himself still seeking and still unsatisfied. And yet there were people afterwards who accused him of careless workmanship ! The difficulty was really in his own conception, which

¹ This the sculptor always does.



BALZAC (MONUMENT)

aimed at producing a Balzac interpreted from within rather than from without—a statue illuminated by the fire of the soul, and materialized only to render the spirit visible.

Amid such preoccupations and essays, month after month glided by, and the one thing increasingly evident was that he would not be ready by the end of 1892, which was the appointed date. At present he realized how wrong he had been to bind himself, his genius working freely only when untrammelled by restrictions of time. In December, 1892, he received some not very agreeable letters from the ‘Société des Gens de Lettres,’ and others of the same tenor when six months more had elapsed without delivery. Pressed to fix a later date, he spoke of trying to be ready for the autumn of 1894 or the spring of 1895. However, before the expiration of the intervening period, a second agreement was drawn up, with the obnoxious time-clause eliminated. The Committee allowed him as long as he pleased to complete his task, and he returned the ten thousand francs earnest money. The dispute was not very creditable to the hostile majority of the ‘Men of Letters Society,’ among whom, curiously enough, was Zola. They behaved throughout somewhat like a harsh overseer dealing with some roadman or other that had failed to break his heap of

stones by the close of day. To the credit of a minority, be it said that they retired from the Committee at an early stage in the proceedings.

Free now to experiment again, Rodin entirely remodelled the statue and altered it. From waist to head he inclined the body backwards, with a lifting movement upwards, whereas before there had been a bend somewhat to the front and downwards; and the expression of the face was changed from that of quiet reverie to one of intense vision. At last, he had found a pose that corresponded to his idea. To a journalist, in 1896, he said: 'To-day the bulk of the work is done. I have made a *Balzac* that pleases me. It would have been a better one, had I been let alone. But, as I have planted him on his feet, my dear, great man satisfies my conception of him. I have endeavoured to put into a simple statue not only all my admiration, but that of others for the master-writer. A few months are needed before submitting it to popular inspection. Within a year the subscribers shall have their wish, if only I am granted the tranquillity so necessary to me.'

The year turned out to be eighteen months. It was only in the spring of 1898 that the *Balzac* quitted the studio and was conveyed to the *Salon*. To the public, who did not and could not be expected to

comprehend the artist's scruples and the necessity for him to keep his work under his eye on probation, this long delay seemed to be the confession of weakness or folly. Certain members of the 'Men of Letters Society,' by their indiscreet conversations and ill-natured remarks, encouraged a campaign of satire and ridicule that had its echoes in the press and was talked of by the man in the street. It was perhaps in reply to some of this backbiting that, just as the statue was leaving the Rue de l'Université, he said to a member of the press : 'I hope I have succeeded ; and yet, if I must be frank, I must own that I should have liked to keep still for some months, away from every eye, the figure to which I have given the final pressure of my thumb. I should prefer to contemplate it every day for a while, and wait until a sudden inspiration, such as occasionally flashes through the brain, came to flood my imagination and enable me to perfect and idealize my work. For a work, even when achieved, is never perfect ; it is always susceptible of a modification that can increase its beauty.'¹

From what has already been related, it is easy to gather that an atmosphere of prejudice had been formed prior to the exhibition of the statue, and that,

¹ For the rest of the quotation, see my larger *Life of Rodin*. Fisher Unwin, 1906.

with the exception of a few who were always Rodin's faithful supporters, the critics, instead of guiding the public and showing them how to view this latest masterpiece, took pleasure in darkening counsel. The general appetite had been whetted to a sort of morbid curiosity ; and the vast majority did what morbid curiosity usually incites people to do, they went and thrust their noses right into the very plaster ; and this is what they saw : On a pedestal a huge pillar with an equally huge head at the top of it ; dishevelled hair, prominent, bristling eyebrows, deep-set eyes that seemed lost in their orbits, thick-lipped mouth whose meaning they were at a loss to guess—a man in a sack ! That was their summary ; and they went away, repeating their rash opinion to their friends. Exactly the same chaotic impression may be obtained of the finest painting of the greatest artist if the spectator walks right up to the canvas and gets all its values confused on the retina of his eye.

What each spectator ought to have done was to place himself at the distance required by the dimensions of the statue and to walk slowly round it. In the right perspective the whole realizes the intention of the sculptor. The sack becomes a semi-transparent vestment swathing a living body. The torso and limbs reveal their form and peculiar energy through

their covering just as clearly as if it did not exist—the shoulders forced slightly forward by the arms crossed in front, the hands holding the edges of the gown and making one lap over the other, the right leg at ease, the left one supporting the weight of the trunk. And then the head, from which the proper light causes such power of expression to radiate, the eyes piercing, the nostrils sensitive and quivering, the mouth at once serene and proud ! How well the countenance agrees with the description given of it by Gautier, showing, as he puts it, ‘a sort of puissant hilarity, a Rabelaisian mirth, but ennobled by a mind of the highest order.’ All the figure, in fine, is full of force, and needed only to be cast in bronze or fine-hewn in marble for its qualities to be as splendidly manifest as were those of the *Baiser*, which stood near it in the same exhibition.

Rodin’s own pronouncement on the contrast offered by these two creations of his merits quotation¹ :— ‘When my marble group was carried away,’ he said, ‘it passed in front of the *Balzac*, which I had left on purpose in the yard in order to get a good look at it in the open air. I was not dissatisfied with the simple vigour of my marble ; but, just when it was going by, I felt it was tame, and yielded to the other, as the

¹ Related by Camille Mauclair in the *Revue des Revues*.

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celebrated torso of Michael Angelo to the antique statues ; and I realized that I was right, even though I were alone against every one. My modellings are present, whatever may be said to the contrary, and they would be present less if I were to finish more in appearance. As to polishing and repolishing toes or locks of hair, this has no interest in my eyes, and would compromise the central idea, the grand lines, the soul of what I intended to express ; and I have nothing more to say to the public on the matter. Here must be the limits between them and me, between the faith they should have in me and the concessions I have no right to make.'

Already ill-disposed towards the sculptor on account of their previous quarrel with him, and influenced by the hasty verdict of the crowd, the 'Men of Letters Society,' almost as soon as the *Salon* opened, passed a resolution declining to accept what they called 'Monsieur Rodin's rough model,' in which they did not recognize Balzac ; and they added that they would not pay for the work. This insulting note, in defiance of the 1894 arrangement binding them to receive the statue as delivered, proved that the men who carried it possessed all the irritability of the author's tribe, but very little commercial honesty. There was no proposal to meet the sculptor and

discuss the matter with him, no account made of the long toil and great expense incurred. A solemn engagement was repudiated as if it had been a jest, and one of the first artists of the time was treated with a vulgar insolence that from men of such standing perhaps has no parallel. If Rodin had chosen to sue the Society, he could certainly have compelled payment. But after reflection he preferred not to take their money, since they would not take his statue. Others would have gladly bought it. Offers came from private collectors and from public authorities. A committee of his own countrymen wished to purchase it and erect it in some other part of Paris. These offers he did not accede to, from motives that he explained in the following letter :—

‘**M**Y DEAR FRIENDS,—The statue of Balzac was ordered from me by the “Société des Gens de Lettres” for a site in Paris, which the Society had obtained from the Town Council. It is to such a destination that my statue is fitted in my thought. This monument is the logical outcome of my artist career. I take the responsibility of it ; and my desire is to remain in possession of it until the day when, as I have a right to hope, justice will be done to me. I thank you all, my dear friends, for your courageous devotion. It is with real emotion that I beg you to express my

gratitude to all those who, in such a valiant way, have given me so much sympathy. I consider this, up to now, as my best reward. Let me be content with this manifestation, and ask you to convey my sincerest thanks to those that have joined you, and, at the same time, my formal wish to remain the sole possessor of my production.—Yours, my dear friends, with deep obligation,

‘RODIN.’

Instead, therefore, of our sculptor’s *Balzac*—which, it may be safely asserted, would in the long run have won its way into public favour—Parisians now have one by Falguière, erected in the Avenue Friedland, where no one pays any attention to it, because there is absolutely nothing that is worth remarking.

That is the story. Were Rodin’s conception and execution a mistake? That there were alternative renderings which he could have given with infinitely less trouble is certain. He might have dispensed with the gown altogether, and once more displayed his marvellous modellings of the human body; or he might have made the gown so thin as to cling to the trunk and limbs in a thousand minute folds and permit of these latter being seen as through a veil of gauze. In fact, as far as the crowd was concerned, the thickness of the gown and the simplicity of its folds were what they could not approve. In art as in socialities,



BALZAC (SECOND VIEW) (MONUMENT)

the crowd, incapable of creating or imagining a fashion, insists on its being followed.

Rodin's *Balzac* is true to nature, true to life, but is not fashionable. When fifty years have gone by, what he has done will be made into a style which will be imitated; but, with the fashion and imitation, its truth will probably have departed. This truth is the manifestation of spirit through the veil of flesh. And to it our sculptor, in his most Gothic masterpiece, has fully attained.

IX

MATURITY

MUCH of what may be called Rodin's maturity has been spent in the country that he loves so dearly. His home he fixed there in 1890, amidst a neighbourhood of the great city bordering on the river, near enough to his Paris studio to reach it without much loss of time, yet not far from the broad, stretching landscapes that abound on the south side of the French capital, round Châtillon, Vélizy, Jouy-en-Josas and the Bièvre valley. At first he rented at Bellevue, by Sèvres, a villa once occupied by Scribe and bearing that dramatist's name. After four years spent there, he bought the Villa des Brillants, on the heights of Meudon, and has since continued to occupy this residence, adding to its grounds as means and opportunity have allowed. The house and garden command a beautiful view over and along the Seine, towards Suresnes. Inland from the river lies a valley—the Val Fleuri, or valley of flowers, it is called—whence rise hills that run round to the north

in wide and graceful curve, and turn the Seine with them. Up these hills climb the villages of Meudon, Bellevue, Sèvres, and St. Cloud, with their variegated colouring of red, green, and white ; and, to the right, spreads the wood of Boulogne, with Paris beyond. For health and retirement, with proximity to his work, he could not have chosen a better spot.

Was there any relation between this quieter country life that now began and the undoubted development and change in the sculptor's style during the early nineties ? Possibly. In one of his conversations with me, Rodin said : ' I used to think that movement was the chief thing in sculpture ; and, in all I did, it was what I tried to attain. My *Hell Gate* is the record of these strivings. It contains their whole history. In its figures I have made movement yield all it can. I have come gradually to feel that sculptural expression is the essence of the statuary art—expression through the modelling. This is what made the grandeur of the Greeks. There is repose, wonderful repose and restfulness in their sculpture ; not the repose of the academic style, which is the absence of nature, the absence of life, but the repose of strength, the repose of conscious power, the impression resulting from the flesh being under the control of the spirit.'

The change, however, is noticeable, to some extent,

a little earlier, as one of the smaller statues at present in the Luxembourg demonstrates—the *Old Helmet-bearer's Wife*, finished towards the end of the eighties. The original was a poor and aged Italian widow, who came to Rodin's studio one day and was induced to pose. In the statue we have one of the most faithful representations of that phase of life described by Shakespeare in his ‘Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.’ She sits with bowed head and back, one arm holding the seat and the other behind her, as if endeavouring to straighten up the breast and shoulders drawn down by the weight of years and sorrows. Hardly more than skin and bone, a mass of wrinkles and puckers, there is something indescribably pathetic in this ruined form. It is not repugnant to look at. On the contrary, it attracts. It makes us perceive what people do not always perceive in the flesh, as the sculptor says, that ‘reality of every kind can have its perfection, age no less than youth, what is called ugly no less than what is called beautiful. In some measure this is recognized in painting—and more in painting than in sculpture. The portraits of Rembrandt and Holbein show people old and wrinkled ; but the beauty is there that belongs to humanity. It cannot be otherwise.’

One benefit of Rodin's removal from Paris was the

comparative freedom it gave him from the society ties that gradually come to hamper a celebrity when in a town. Dwelling apart from the *world*, it was easier for him to refuse invitations that interfered with his work. On the other hand, to this retreat up on the hills came the friends he cared for, and were welcomed with a simple but warm-hearted hospitality. The years following on his settlement there yielded an amazing production of masterpieces. In addition to the various public monuments that were completed or else entirely executed in the nineties, and a continuous series of busts, there were numerous pieces of statuary that carried his total achievement for the decade up to something like a hundred. What makes this the more remarkable is that the period throughout was a troublous one. Each of the big monuments occasioned him serious annoyances, and one, at least,—the *Balzac*—considerable pecuniary loss. Moreover, there were the constant attacks that he had to put up with—attacks often going far beyond all bounds of lawful criticism. Happily, he continued to gain and to keep friends, who both defended and encouraged him; and then, sometimes, he was able to get away for a ramble in company with some congenial spirit, and either visit familiar haunts or seek for pastures new, now with Fritz Thaülow in Brittany, now with Carrière in

Jersey and Guernsey, now with Besnard in Normandy—all artists, and able to exchange with him impressions and ideas concerning art and nature.

Glimpses into his life during the first half of the ninety decade are again afforded us by de Goncourt in his Diary. In 1891 the latter writes : ‘Walking before dinner, Rodin spoke to me of his admiration for the Javanese dancing women, and of the sketches he has made of them. He talked also of similar studies of a Japanese village transplanted to London, in which Japanese women-dancers were seen. He finds our dances are too jerky, too much of a hop, while these dances are a succession of movements engendering and producing a serpent-like undulation.’ An entry in 1893 casts a side-light upon the Balzac episode,¹ and partly explains the first delay : ‘Rodin complains this year of being without any go, of feeling washed out, of being under the influence of suppressed *grippe*. He has worked all the same, but has executed only things without importance.’ The degree to which the sculptor has affected the art of his time is alluded to in a passage written in 1894 : ‘Yesterday, Frantz Jourdain, speaking to me of his son, said to me that now in the studios everything is changed in the pose of the model, that it is no longer the balanced attitudes of Marius on the

¹ See chap. viii.



APOLLO (OF THE SARMIENTO STATUE)

(See page 134)

ruins of Minturnae, but the tormented and twisted Michael Angelo figures of Rodin.' The last entry, in 1895, speaks for itself without comment. De Goncourt says : 'In the train, Rodin, whom I found really changed and very melancholy on account of his low state and the fatigue he felt from his work at the moment, complained almost distressingly of the vexations which, in the painter's and sculptor's career, are inflicted on artists by art committees, who, instead of helping them in their work, make them lose their time in solicitations and runnings about, time that he would prefer to employ in engraving.'

It is probable enough that the griefs and disappointments of one kind and another—private as well as public—endured by the sculptor during this period, may have inspired him with two of the subjects then taken up, *Illusion* and the *Caryatide*.

In the first, the Icarus legend is adapted to its most modern meaning. There is a mortal represented just at the moment of falling to earth, after soaring into the empyrean. Only the face touches the ground. The rest of the body is still upheld by the faintly beating wings wide-outspread and framing the tired limbs with a sort of canopy. It is the plaint of hope deceived, of ambition thwarted by hard circumstance, the long sigh of weariness and despair, after useless effort, dying

away into the eternally irresponsive ether. All the battle and tragedy of life are in this exquisite piece of modelling—a veritable poem in marble.

The *Caryatide*, a companion theme, illustrates another woe, that of duty strained to the breaking point. Twisted and twined into the shape of some quaint-looking vase or vessel, with the head, bust, and crossed arms bending over the lower trunk like a too heavily-laden ear of corn, we have an exceeding fair woman sunk under the huge block that she has been trying to bear, and that has weighed her down until she is almost crushed double. The way in which the sculptor has treated this most difficult piece of composition is a good example of his pursuing and seeking out form in all its aspects, and of his power to express in his material, through simple but original poses, each and every of the soul's experiences.

Rodin's continental reputation grew steadily all through the nineties. Following England, which, thanks to Henley and Robert Louis Stevenson, was the first foreign country to recognize his genius, Germany commenced buying his statuary. The German Henley was Count Kessler, whose writings on the French master created a keen interest that has persisted and manifested itself in frequent expositions of the sculptor's masterpieces. Italy and Austria

with Hungary came next, and then Norway and Sweden.

Jealousy and misunderstanding sometimes made their voice heard abroad as well as at home. An incident that occurred in 1897 may be given as an example. In the previous year, Prince Eugene of Sweden had visited the Rue de l'Université studio, in company with the Norwegian painter Thäülow, and invited Rodin to contribute to the success of the forthcoming Stockholm Exhibition. So Rodin sent a bronze bust of *Dalou* and a plaster cast of the *Inner Voice*. When the State purchases were being made at the close of the Exhibition, a proposal was brought forward by the Secretary of the Committee that the *Dalou* bust should be acquired. Most of the Swedish sculptors voted against the motion, which was rejected. Thereupon the Christiania Museum bought it. Not knowing this, Rodin had written offering to present the National Museum with the *Inner Voice*. Adding insult to injury, the authorities refused the offer. To show his displeasure at such behaviour, the King purchased the statue himself; and, as a mark of his high appreciation, conferred on the artist the Commander's Cross of the Vasa Order.¹

¹ Stockholm has since acquired a bust of *Victor Hugo* and a reduction of the *Citizens of Calais*.

The influence of the green-eyed monster was present likewise as an undercurrent in another incident that occurred somewhere about the same date on the other side of the Atlantic. In the year 1894, Rodin was asked to undertake a monumental statue which the people of the Argentine Republic were desirous of raising to the memory of one of their presidents, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, who had died in 1888. This great man had devoted his maturer strength to the task of dowering his country with a comprehensive and thorough system of education. Instructed by his previous experience when dealing with a far-away South American committee, the sculptor insisted on guarantees being furnished, and, having obtained them, accepted the commission. Being requested to add a pedestal with an allegory, he combined the Apollo and Hercules myths, and modelled a god in high relief on a background of cloud and shadow, the god extending his arms to cast the darkness from him, while one hand crushed a snake, and his feet spurned other venomous creatures that crawl below. This tableau represented Sarmiento's fight with ignorance and his victory over its oppositions. Though having some minor resemblance to the Apollo of the *Claude Lorrain*, the composition was essentially a new one, with an astonishing vigour of action and great brilliancy of

execution. A plaster cast remains in the Meudon Museum to testify to these qualities.

For the likeness of the President the sculptor had to depend on the camera's fidelity and what he could gather from friends and written documents. As always, he took great trouble to ensure the reproduction of the real man; and, as usual, he did not flatter enough for the taste of the crowd. Yet the figure, seen in photographs of the monument at its unveiling in 1900, appears noble enough, standing at ease with a scroll in the left hand and the right lifted to the breast. It was the head which jealous sculptors of the country or their friends chiefly criticized: too small for the body, this cranium, the hair too abundant, the forehead too receding, the aspect too ape-like. In truth, the head seems to suit the body very well, and has no more of the monkey about it than the human face in general. Strongly marked features of the genial yet resolute type characterize it; and the whole aspect is striking and agreeable. Against these captious fault-finders, Señor Schiaffino, Director of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Buenos Ayres, where the monument was erected, wrote: 'No one of those who knew Sarmiento, or examined, during his life, any of his portraits, will hesitate to recognize our great man at first sight.' A second favourable critic said: 'The

artist has not failed in the historic truth which is imposed on all. He has dealt freely with material exactitude in order to aggrandize his hero and raise the soul of his contemporaries.'

The only point in the quarrel interesting to outsiders, since the question of likeness is one they cannot enter into, is the relation of the real personage to the ideal, and the placing of the former above the latter. In the *Sarmiento* as in the *Claude Lorrain*, there is a reversal of what is expected by the ordinary spectator, who looks to the upper part for that which he considers the most admirable; and the unfavourable criticism lavished on the monument was undoubtedly caused in a large measure by the failure of the public to find it. Indeed, it is the few only who prefer the faithful presentation of a fellow-mortal, in tailor-made costume, whatever be the amount of soul shining out of his eyes, to the suave contours of a splendidly-modelled nude Apollo. Aubé probably felt this when he placed his *Gambetta*, which stands in the Louvre courtyard, at the bottom of the soaring column. Of course, when the carving on the pedestal is in miniature and in low relief, there is nothing to dominate the chief theme; but, in Rodin's monuments, where the allegory has the same proportions as the chief theme and forms a masterpiece in itself, one needs an eye capable of

equalizing the merits of the two parts and of combining them into a whole.

The United States learned to appreciate Rodin almost as soon as England did. Two citizens of the Republic, T. H. Bartlett and W. E. Brownell, made his acquaintance about the middle of the eighties; and, on their return to America, published articles eulogizing and explaining his sculpture. At the Chicago Exhibition of 1893 were plaster casts of the *Citizens of Calais*, *Francesca and Paolo*, and the *Kiss*, with one or two other pieces. About the same date, the late Mr. Yerkes began his collection of the sculptor's works. Like the *Orpheus and Eurydice*, which has been already mentioned,¹ another group equally fine, the *Cupid and Psyche*, also acquired by Mr. Yerkes, has never been reproduced. There is resemblance, besides, in the pathos of the two subjects. The god of love is shown departing from his fair spouse after the fatal act of mistrust, and she is endeavouring to retain him.

Towards the close of the ninety decade, the sculptor, encouraged by a proffered loan from some Paris bankers, conceived the happy idea of constructing a pavilion near to the exhibition that was in preparation, and of gathering in it the whole production of his life. A temporary grant of a site was made

¹ See chap. iv.

him by the Paris Municipal Council; and, on the 1st of June, 1900, the exposition was inaugurated. No fewer than one hundred and seventy-one pieces of statuary, all told, were placed on view, some in bronze, others in marble, others again in plaster. It was, in a manner, Rodin's apotheosis. The most eminent artists and critics of the day bore testimony to his worth. Carrière said: 'Rodin's art issues from the earth and returns to it, like those giant blocks, rocks, or dolmens which guard the desert, and in whose heroic proportions man has recognized something of himself.' Monet called him a 'man unique in these times and great among the greatest.' Besnard, himself astonished at the sight before his eyes, exclaimed: 'I imagine that Rodin's brain contains the total idea of the world with all its forms, its symbols, and their innumerable complexities, whence far-reaching syntheses are born.'¹

In truth, there was enough to surprise even those that knew the sculptor's production best. The amount of it was overpowering, the variety seemed to be infinite, and the execution such that each piece was worthy of study, whatever might be individual preferences.

¹ For the complete expression of opinion of these artists and of certain critics, see my larger *Life of Rodin*. Fisher Unwin, 1906.



MOTHER AND BABE

(See page 140)

There were very many nude female figures, some standing, some sitting, some prone or prostrate, some leaning or bending, some squatting or cowering ; and all of them were engaged in some characteristic movement of the body, or had a posture indicative of mind agitation. The actions and attitude, too, ranged from those depending on some simple need or emotion to those suggested by more complex notions and sentiments. Joy and sorrow were represented, and the passion of love in its different moods. The expressions were as diverse as the poses, and the features were not always beautiful as the common definition of beauty goes ; but there was that suppleness and vibration about every form which made one feel as if in presence of an assembly of the living models.

The single male figures were less numerous. However, besides the more celebrated statues, like the *Balzac* for example, each had some striking and peculiar quality ; to select one only, the so-called *Prodigal Son*, with its planes and lines reduced to the greatest simplicity. Kneeling and suppliant, the arms flung aloft and the face straining upwards, it presented a most pathetic picture of deep contrition and ardent yearning for forgiveness.

Of the groups, some showed only women, sirens mingling with the waves, chaste Graces, careless

nymphs, or woebegone light o' loves. But in most of them the two sexes were represented, with an additional interest supplied by the relation of the one to the other. Here it was love's dalliance—*A Dryad and a Fawn*, there, love's fiercer desire—*A Satyr struggling with a Maiden*. Novel in conception and powerfully executed, the *Flight of Love* bore a couple through the air back to back. Elsewhere, *Saint Antony* on his knees strove to hide himself with his mantle from a fair temptress that stooped over him. Nor did the love myths of *Venus and Adonis* and *Daphnis and Lycenion* lack their sculptural presentment. Legends of another order were also interpreted, *Niobe and Her Children*, *Vulcan and Pandora*, and *Perseus and Medusa*, the last group exhibiting the hero just as he has cut off and holds on high the Gorgon's head. And then there were gentler themes. *A Mother and Her Babe*, with a grotto to enclose them, and an *Elder Sister with a tiny Brother clinging to Her*, nude forms of surpassing loveliness. The latter group is an exceedingly good illustration of the softness of outline to be found in all Rodin's nudes, a softness that makes his forms, so to speak, melt into the ambient atmosphere just as though they were in sympathy with it.

Lastly, there were treatments—*the Hand of God*,

and *Man and His Thought*, for instance—from which one saw that the sculptor would now and again begin his modelling without any distinct notion of what he was going to produce, his *Demon* prompting him but not revealing the goal of arrival. In the first, the colossal *Hand*, fashioned with consummate skill, was a mass of clay, and, still adhering to it, the primeval human parents moulded by the puissant fingers of the creator. The second was a mighty block of marble roughly hewn into a sort of torso. One side of it presented the vaguely-limned, yet delicate outlines of a child, cut in high relief on the rocky mass in which its feet were buried ; and in front of it the upper part only of a man's figure emerged from the base, touching the child's form at several points and seeming to kiss the breast. The whole was a weird, plastic rendering of the mind's mystery and the impenetrable background on which its processes evolve.

The Pavilion served its purpose. It enabled Rodin to reply in the most effectual manner to the attacks of his enemies ; and confirmed the estimate already come to by the best common sense of his contemporaries. Pecuniarily, too, it was a success. The proceeds sufficed to pay off the debt incurred in its erection, and to transfer it at the close of the exhibition year to the garden of the Villa des Brillants. There it has since

stood, serving partly as a studio and partly as a permanent museum.

It was only to be expected that so great a display in Paris should increase the demand for expositions of a similar kind abroad. Allusion has been made to some of those held before 1900, which, as they grew in importance, often called for the sculptor's personal supervision in the arrangement. Thus began a series of visits, which were not infrequently utilized for some exceedingly pleasant excursions. That in 1899 to Holland was a joy. Rodin yet speaks of it to-day with tender recollection. It allowed him to re-study Rembrandt, and to penetrate deeper, amid his rambles through Dutch scenery, into the secrets of Flemish art. Occasionally the journeys gave rise to demonstrations in his honour, one of which in Prague in 1902 surpassed by its enthusiasm anything accorded to an artist in modern times. That which came nearest in England was the reception he received in 1902, after the banquet celebrating the acquisition by the State of his *Penseur* or *Thinker*, when the South Kensington and Slade students unharnessed the horses of his carriage and themselves conducted him through the streets. The action was a fitting prelude to the honour soon after done him by electing him to the presidency of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and

Gravers, in the place of Whistler. This proud position had been in a manner prophesied by one of England's greatest sons in literature, Robert Louis Stevenson, who, as early as 1886, in a letter to the *Times*, said : ‘Monsieur Rodin’s work . . . is no triumph of workmanship lending an interest to what is base, but, to an increasing degree as he proceeds in life, the noble expression of noble sentiment and thought. . . . The public are weary of statues that say nothing. Well, here is a man coming forward whose statues live and speak, and speak things worth uttering. Give him time, spare him nicknames and the cant of cliques, and I venture to predict this man will take a place in the public heart.’¹

As in Sweden, so in Italy, the penetration of our sculptor’s work provoked considerable hostility. It was an exposition of nineteen pieces at Venice, in 1901, that occasioned the greatest outburst, though a similar but less noisy explosion had already occurred in Rome. Critics made the usual accusations of error in proportion and lack of finish, forgetful of the fact that their own Michael Angelo had been intentionally guilty of the same things, doing them, as Signor Corrado Ricci reminded the accusers, “by

¹ For the rest of this letter and another one by the same writer, see my *Life of Rodin*. Fisher Unwin, 1906

artistic judgment." This phase of opposition has died away. It was one of the last echoes in the long controversy from which Rodin has come out vanquisher. The years of the present century have been marked rather by repeated recognitions of his merit both at home and abroad. In 1903 he received from his own Government the high title of Commander in the Legion of Honour. Two years later, the University of Jena, as a sequel to the exposition of his statuary at Berlin, Düsseldorf, and elsewhere, conferred on him the degree of Doctor, a courtesy acknowledged by the gift of a bust of *Minerva*. In 1905 the far-off Australia applied to him for something of his to put in her museums; and, in the year following, our own King Edward honoured him with an interview in London. Lastly, from the University of Oxford, in the June of this year, he received the honorary degree of D.C.L. Of all these manifestations of esteem none, perhaps, touched him more than the sort of family party prepared him, in 1903, in the woods of Vélizy, near Versailles, by some of his oldest friends and younger colleagues, Besnard, Thaülow, Baffier, Bourdelle, Schneeg, Mirbeau, and some others. Thaülow, the painter—now, alas! dead—played his violin; and the American Isidora Duncan, celebrated for her terpsichorean skill, danced on the greensward.

Emile Bourdelle, himself an original sculptor and painter destined to celebrity, summed up the feeling of those present when he said to their guest : 'The influence of your art is so deep, so extensive, so inevitable, that none of us (if he has understood you) would wish to conceive himself, would wish to conceive his own science bereaved of you and yours.'

Some of the work done in recent years has consisted in taking up themes similar to earlier ones, and treating them differently. In the *Salon* of this year (1907) there was the headless figure of a man, of heroic size and most puissantly fashioned, in the act of walking. This it was impossible to look at without being at once reminded of the *John Baptist*. The details in the larger body were not quite the same as those of the smaller one; and there was a more evident intention in it to justify the title, *L'homme qui marche*; but the execution was a parallel one. A group called the *Creation of Woman*, in like manner, is connected with the *Hand of God*. Above is the creating hand, and below is the mother of mankind, perfectly made but hardly detached from Adam's rib. Again, two small children, a baby brother caressing and hugging a baby sister on his knees, may be considered a miniature of the celebrated *Baiser*. These little mites are charming.

Modern work also exhibits a continued preference for maintaining the rough block as a background and placing the statuary in high or low relief upon it. A *Prometheus Bound* on his rock has a strong resemblance to a crucified martyr. Here the rock is a containing hollow. In the *Last Vision* it surges and rolls. Almost hidden by a mass of cloud, the darkness of eternity, we see the face of a dying man from whose eyes his hands would fain tear the film that dims them ; and, above, emerging from the same ambient darkness, the calm, sweet face of a wife or betrothed, to which a supporting hand lends stability.

A good example of Rodin's imaginative sculpture is the piece entitled the *Soul and the Body*, which, though recent, is not quite new. It adapts the Greek centaur to a Christian interpretation. In the woman's form straining upwards and forwards and the animal's form dragging backwards and earthwards, both being joined together as if organically one, the struggle of the higher and lower natures is vividly represented. It is a monstrosity made reasonable by dint of skill. Strange, weird even, yet acceptable we find it, if familiar with our sculptor's style. Rodin has a habit of translating his ideas, his thoughts, his dreams into their plastic equivalents.

Truth to tell, time and money are not always forth-



ETERNAL IDOL

(See page 154)

coming for the task. His *Monument to Labour* is still, some years after its inception, only a rough model a few feet high. Even in this condition it imposes itself upon the mind. In its main outlines, it is a tower composed of a thick, central shaft, with a winding staircase from base to summit. The outside is a framework of vertical pillars that are cut with sloping, transversal bars, so that, all up the staircase, a series of wide apertures allows the light to penetrate freely, and renders every part of the interior visible. From the bottom to the top of the shaft, carved on its scroll, is the history of man's progress, beginning with the elementary, manual arts and proceeding gradually to the more purely intellectual and moral sciences. At the entrance stand the two opposing figures of Night and Day; and, on the summit, lightly pose two Genii, the bearers of blessings. Down in the basement are naturally exhibited the labours of the miner and the diver. Thence, in ascending order, come masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, joiners, potters, etc., in costumes indicative of their trade and occupation. An inscription explains that the plan is to blend the economy of the hive with the spiral and to make them typical of man's unceasing evolution. Where the shaft issues from its envelope the ninth round ends. The Blessings crowning the monument have been executed as a

separate piece of sculpture ; the remainder awaits such public or private initiative as would warrant the continuation of the undertaking.

Rodin has never created a school of pupils. Even those of his younger colleagues entrusted with the fine-hewing of many of his pieces of statuary have each their own style, which he has encouraged, not seeking to bend their individual talent to his own standard. What he has done rather has been always to advise those that have come to him and to encourage their efforts. In this way his influence has been enormous, extending beyond his friends and affecting men decrying him. To English-speaking artists—men and women—he has similarly afforded the help of his knowledge and experience. Not infrequently they are to be met with at his studio or at Meudon, having come over to France to consult him. Acknowledging this indebtedness, one of his former pupils, Mr. G. Natorp, wrote to me the following interesting account of their relations :—

‘In 1881, intending to spend the winter in Italy, with a view to a little study of sculpture (I had only drawn and painted so far), Legros suggested my putting myself under Rodin’s tuition for four or six weeks. So I became Rodin’s pupil in November. His teaching was absolutely a revelation to me. I do not

believe he has his equal in the ability to give his inferiors the benefit of his vast insight into the great principles of all art, by his wonderful power of analysis, and by the warmth of his admiration for all that is great in art and in nature. While I was at the Boulevard Montparnasse he came to me twice a week, from November, 1881, to May, 1882; and not the least admirable lessons were those when we left the studio after dark, and when, talking most delightfully about his art, he would take me to a café, call for pen, ink, and paper, and illustrate his views on composition, etc., by his masterly drawings. Needless to say, I have them with me. I was his first pupil; but several more—R. Barrett Browning, F. Baden-Powell, etc.—were attracted by him; and he joined me and my chums in our monthly dinners. This fact brought many other artists to them—Sargent, de Nittis, Besnard, Edelfelt, Collin, Gervex, etc.—and we had the most delightful gatherings. In the winter of 1881–2, Professor Legros came to Paris on a visit to me, and sat to Rodin for his bust in my studio. I returned to Paris in October, 1882, and stayed until June, 1883, Rodin coming to see me twice a month. I was then doing a two-thirds life statuette of Hercules, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1884, and at the *Salon*. When I left, Rodin said: “Now, I have given you a

compass by means of which, with nature as a professor, you can steer by yourself." What an admirable master! Rodin came to London with me in June, 1883, and stayed a week or two in my former house in Palace Gardens Terrace. He was charmed with our galleries, and with everything he saw and heard here; for I must not omit to say he is very fond of listening to good music. Rodin paid me another visit in 1886 or 1887. After that, his appearances in London were only short ones; but we always saw something of each other, and he does not forget his old pupil. I may add that, during the 1887 visit, I gave a dinner in honour of Rodin, at which most of the prominent sculptors and painters were present.'

Others besides Mr. Natorp could give similar testimony. The house at Meudon and the museum, or rather museums, for there are two, have become of late years quite a resort of art pilgrims, who, if known, are welcomed, often at a considerable sacrifice of time.

The second museum, being at some little distance from the villa and down in the valley, is less familiar to visitors than the pavilion. It is an old house, which was purchased a few years ago to be utilized as a sort of store-room for plaster casts of statues and monuments. Then gradually the pieces of Gothic

sculpture found their way thither, which it has been Rodin's hobby to collect all his life—fragments of cornices, windows, porches, or figurines and gargoyles, etc.—most of them being casts made from the original stone by complaisant repairers, yet exceedingly precious to one so versed in architecture as their present possessor. And, last of all, the studies of the nude, drawings sketched at different periods, were assembled there, so that to-day this second museum is, so to speak, a reference library to which its owner may go for purposes of comparison. The pavilion still contains, as when it was on the Place de l'Alma, a representative exhibition of the sculptor's statuary. And it has the added charm that there is something new, as well as the old, whenever one enters it again. Being ever at work, and delighting in this spot, Rodin brings from the auxiliary studios at Meudon now one and now another of his latest productions, finished or unfinished, and places them amid the concourse of their elders, as if to invite an expression of opinion from these. The villa is an unpretentious red-brick building of Louis XIII style, with two stories over the ground floor, the top one being an attic with windows projecting from the steeply slanting roof. At first it was single-fronted, but subsequently a vast studio drawing-room was tacked on to it by its then owner, an artist.

The long drive leading to it from the public road curiously enough gives access to the back premises, stables, etc. The front of the house has been made to face on to the gardens, no doubt to enjoy the valley of the Seine with its fair landscape. The inside is furnished most plainly, and the studio drawing-room itself is mainly used as a home for the increasing number of paintings and pieces of old Greek statuary that the master of the villa acquires either by gift or purchase. ‘It seems strange to some that I keep my drawing-room so,’ he says, ‘but it allows me to have under my hand the things I have got together for my pleasure. I like to take them up as I pass by, which would be difficult if everything were in order.’ Moreover, in such surroundings, where nature and art are supreme, the lack of modern luxury is not felt.

Rodin’s individuality is a strong one. Physically, he is short and burly, his massive head being joined to broad shoulders by a capacious neck. Barnouvin’s portrait of him, when he was a youth of seventeen, shows him somewhat thin. Nor had the slimness much changed when Sargent painted him in the early eighties. Maturity has thickened his frame and given fullness to the face, with its large nose, of slightly aquiline shape, broad at the extremity, and its eyes

half-hidden under projecting brows ; but has thinned the formerly abundant hair, greyed the moustache and flowing beard, and furrowed with deep lines the forehead and cheeks. The whole aspect is one of power, but rather of latent energy, rousing itself only for its own preferred task, and in no wise aggressive or seeking to impose itself. The play of feature is disconcerting by its rapid changes. At one time it is alight with indulgent benevolence, at another with flitting disdain. Now, after a moment's mirth that spreads without explosion, comes a reaction of melancholy, which in turn yields to a look of mild irony.

Years have educated his intuitive perception, and have doubled with it a philosophic humour that leavens his deliberate utterance, giving it lightness and piquancy. Through his Norman descent he has some of the characteristic closeness of the race, with much shrewdness, large receptiveness, and a certain impenetrability. His ardent attachment to nature, which has been much spoken of in the preceding pages, is at once sensuous and spiritual, and proceeds as much from temperament as from training. It is this preponderant passion which has kept him simple in his tastes, in his manners, and in his living. It has also helped to maintain in him the open mind that has made his artistic career one of constant growth. Like

Apelles, he has ever been willing to listen to advice, and to profit by it. His ear is attentive even to chance suggestions emanating sometimes from persons of another profession than his own.

For instance, a French Deputy was one day with a party of friends in the studio, where, at the moment, there was a piece of statuary composed of two kneeling figures, a woman and a man, one against the other, the woman on a higher level, with one arm holding her foot in an attitude of passive coquetry, the man on a lower level, with his hands crossed behind him, kissing her on the bosom. The conception was novel, and the execution a bold mingling of the masculine and feminine dominant bias of action. 'Ah,' said the Deputy, 'the *Eternal Idol!*' The remark struck Rodin. He adopted it as a title. It suited his idea.

This attentive ear is the only basis for Monsieur Médardo Rosso's foolish assertion, recently published in the English press, that our sculptor is indebted to him. It is no doubt a cheap advertisement for a junior to formulate a claim of the kind and to link his name with that of a celebrity ; otherwise the proceeding has nothing to recommend it. If Rodin had ever acted upon a criticism made by Monsieur Rosso, it would be becoming in the latter to boast of it more



BUST OF PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

(See pages 156 and 91)

modestly. But, in fact, there is no indebtedness, unless it be of the younger to the elder; and those in France who have had cognizance of Monsieur Rosso's assertions find them ridiculous, and wonder that any attention should have been paid to them in England.

Apropos, a word or two may be said upon the sculptor's attitude in general towards men of his own profession. Whenever he has benefited by the advice of a colleague, he acknowledges the debt openly. Not even the humbler names of Chapman and his Alsatian friend are passed over in silence. Of younger talent he has never shown himself jealous. On the contrary, he has always been ready to express the pleasure caused him by its successes. 'I thank you for your beautiful head,' he writes to Bourdelle, 'beautiful as a Marseilles woman in repose. . . . I am sure that, after striving like a hero in past years, you will go straight on to the goal, which I see to be one of glory for you.' Towards his old companions his tone is one of singular tenderness; and even when, as in the case of Dalou, a coldness or misunderstanding may have arisen between him and them, he prefers not to talk of the matter. Tenacious though he is in defending his ideas, and capable of using strong language at times in the argument, he carefully avoids personalities, and says

no ill where he does not feel able to praise. Such traits as the foregoing are not altogether common in the worlds of art and letters.

It is probable that Rodin will go on working as long as his hand retains its cunning and his eyes their perception of hidden beauty. There is, however, an unfinished group of statuary in the Meudon Museum which suggests that he now and then longs for a retirement, troubled by no outer noise, in which he would be free to spend his old age. It is a monument destined to be erected, in some park or other verdure-framed spot of Paris, to the memory of Puvis de Chavannes. The bust of the painter, which was described in chapter vi, is on a rustic altar, and to the left of this stands an allegorical man's figure representing *Eternal Repose*. Behind the altar is a tree,¹ with its trunk, branches, and foliage of slender proportions so arranged as to sieve the light, silhouettes being thus made that mingle with the sky. The statue justifies its title. It is life hushed and still that is writ in pose and feature ; and the Greek setting of altar and tree is an invitation to musing.

One has a like impression when looking at his latest and unfinished monument to Whistler, soon to be

¹ The tree will be in bronze, the bust in marble, and the altar in stone.

erected in London. The bust of his predecessor in the Presidency of the International Society is accompanied by a female figure splendidly executed, which, as it stands in the Meudon Museum, still undraped, bowed, and with one leg raised as if preparing to quit the earth, suggests detachment from life's busy hum.

X

RODIN ON THE GOTHIC AND THE ANTIQUE

ALL who have been privileged to listen to Rodin's pronouncements on art will recognize in them teachings of no less utility than those to be drawn from his work. Unfortunately, the fugitive character of such utterances makes it difficult to present them with sequence enough for them to seem a logical whole. Yet, even in disconnected shape, they are most valuable, being derived, as all true teachings should be, from ripe experience and study. The latter throughout his career has been especially directed to the Gothic and the Antique. It has grown, in fact, into a hobby. His collection of ancient sculpture, continually augmented, bids fair to become the finest private one in the world. The passionate love he has, however, for these two efflorescences of art is neither a collector's craze nor a blind worship. It has been developed out of his gradual and ever increasing comprehension of them ; so that to-day

he speaks upon them with an authority that is paramount. If he lives long enough, he is likely to give the fruit of this hardly-gained knowledge to the public in one or more writings of greater length than the two or three articles he has so far been induced to print. I have reason, indeed, to believe that a book on the Gothic and the Antique from his pen and that of his friend Bourdelle, with drawings also from his pencil, will see the light ere long. Meanwhile, as to some extent complementing quotations or allusions on the subjects made in the course of the preceding sketch, a few of his sayings on the same subject are here set down. Those whom they may interest will find more in my larger *Life of Rodin*, and the article in the *North American Review* referred to in chapter II. First, as to the artist, he says :—

‘The artist is the seer. He is the man whose eyes are open, and to whose spirit the essence of things is made known. He does not create, since everything is created already. That which he does is to represent, but with a few elements, not with all. He is no magician, and cannot in verity reproduce. It is an illusion of creation, not the reality that he makes. The better he sees, the more perfect an illusion his representing will be. He can give it solidity, he can give it the equivalents of colour and warmth and movement ; and,

if his vision is deep enough, he can give it the illusion of soul and sentiment.'

For the sculptor, he adds :—

' In the structure proper to each pose there is a fresh combination, and consequently a fresh revelation. He has an eternal field for investigating, an eternal source of delight ; and, if only he will have patience, an eternal power of sculptural representation. He can recommence his work over and over again, and find that the result comes out different each time. I often begin with one intention and finish with another. While fashioning my clay, I see in fancy something that had been lying dormant in my memory, and which rises up before me in what seems to be a vision created by myself. I know it is not this, but a suggested combination of form, which I must already have perceived in nature, and which has never before aroused in me the image that corresponds to it. And then, as I go on, and the execution becomes more complete, there is a sort of reverse process in my mind, and that which I have made reacts on my perception of nature, and I find resemblances and fresh analogies which fill me with joy.

' The ideal is in nature. There both Greeks and Gothic found their force. Do I seek an idea ? No. I take my model with all the force that is in it. The subject, the charm of the subject comes only, therefore,

from nature. Instead of its being the idea which sets in movement, it is the idea which suffers the impulse. I am opposed to the notion that one has an idea and that it aggrandizes the work. The strength of one's work is greater than that of one's idea. I, myself, find that our idea is always poor.

'To assert that the antique—the clear portrait of the marvel of life—is beautiful is to employ an insufficient term, a superficial praise ; for beauty is a culminating, not a starting point ; and a thing can only be *beautiful*, if it is true ; outside of truth, no beauty. Truth itself is nothing more than complete harmony ; and harmony is, in fine, only a bundle of utilities. Now what is the model itself of useful things ? It is nature, in which everything has its reason of existence ; known or unknown of our limited vision, it matters little. The miracle of life could not be perpetuated without the continual renewing of a universal equilibrium. In nature, everything is, therefore, a utility ; between and above these utilities reign harmony, general law ; because harmonious nature is true, and because true she is beautiful, eternally and prodigiously beautiful. The people of antiquity felt this immense rhythm ; they knelt before it ; and their art inspired by it, modelled on it, appears to us the most natural of harmonies, and consequently a sublime expression of beauty.'

‘The antique, which did not understand what we call *fineness*, and which understood only structure, both largely and strongly conceived, had an imagination (in the sense we give to this word) inferior to its supreme passion for truth, to its exalted love of the human form, which, like nature in the aggregate, seemed to it divine.

‘The ancients saw what was essential in life, i.e. the grand planes of a figure and the details of its planes. They confined themselves to the great shadows furnished by these.

‘The antique is simple, and knows how to simplify, which gives it astonishing energy. It is also more studied than appears at first sight. On the surface of a body everything may seem summary, but in reality all the muscles are properly constructed, and the details can be distinguished individually.

‘The ancients studied everything by profiles, by all the profiles successively. In any figure, and in any part of a figure, no one profile is like another. It is only by studying them separately that the whole appears simple and living.

‘It is a mistake to think that an ogive suffices to produce something Gothic. The Gothic is an aggregate—perhaps, with the Greek, the most complete art in the world. The men who invented it knew all that it was possible for them to know. Their science was



EVE

(See page 53)

deep and thorough, and their work is characterized by its possession of volume and depth, qualities which are lacking in the feebler imitations of to-day. Yet there is no heaviness. The mass of their towers is in straight lines; but it is laden with ornament, so that the straight lines from afar look to slightly bulge, which gives a certain morbidezza to the whole.

'The Gothic needs perspective. In the old Roman churches you see a half circle, a simple V-shaped beam in the roof, shapes that, if observed from a wrong angle, seem to be schoolboy planning; but go a short distance away, take in the whole effect, and you will find these seemingly rude and primitive forms arrange themselves into a pattern of the most striking beauty. In art there are so many presumptuous critics that forget the alphabet they are obliged to use in order to spell. What we behold at a foot or a yard or a hundred yards distance cannot be the same, just as there is an enormous difference between what is perceived by the aid of a microscope and that which is embraced by the naked eye. The artist, therefore, must choose, and must proportion his detail to the distance at which his work ought to be regarded; and he is entitled to ask that his work shall be regarded with the perspective that he himself has chosen. Moreover, the artist must learn to adapt these perspectives to the subject he

wishes to treat. This is, perhaps, one of the things he learns last. If he masters this branch of his art thoroughly, he is very near perfection. And yet the attainment is misjudged by the undiscriminating public. Rembrandt went further in this direction in his old age, and his enemies asserted he had forgotten how to paint. The Gothic sculptors, happily, lived in an age when there was less captious criticism in matters of art, and when there was a greater sentiment of the beautiful. They reached the best results of their co-operation and their union. The church was then a centre of artistic amalgamation, which we seek in vain to obtain to-day. The arts suffer by division and separation. Wagner was one of the first among the moderns to perceive this, and his music is an endeavour towards appropriating chord, melody, and harmony to a purpose beyond them, a purpose in which they are subordinate. Wagner was a true Gothic artist—a Gothic sculptor in music, if you will. On the other hand, the statuary of the Gothic sculptors prayed, intoned, and sang, and triumphed in the cathedrals where they lived. It was a grand art, was the Gothic.

‘The Gothic is the result of the study of light and shade. It is, at the same time, architecture made living. In order to have light and shade, strong reliefs

with depths are necessary. The porch of a Gothic church is a sort of cavern ; and in its recesses the figures receive in turn the rays of light throughout the day, so that there are never more than a few personages fully visible at once. The alternating chiaroscuro gives the stone its life. Gothic art exists chiefly by its oppositions—first ornament, then repose. In churches of this style that are characteristic, there is a plain mass of stone at the bottom like the root of a tree ; towards the top come foliage and blossom.'

Speaking on the originality of the Gothics, which he affirms to be greater than that of the Greeks, the Greek temples being alike, whereas the Gothic cathedrals and churches all differ, he continues :—

‘ But this originality is not the culminating side of art. The culminating side is the mingling of strength and grace.

‘ The study of the Gothic,’ he says, ‘ has influenced me in my sculpture—architecture and sculpture are the same thing. It has given me more suppleness, more life, more love. This may be seen in my figures, which have become more mysterious, an effect due to light and shade. And when I speak of light and shade, it is not of them as qualities of painting. They are the planes. And what are the planes ? They are geometric points rendered perceptible by the light.

'In the Gothic, detail is always subordinated to the whole. Yet it is the same system throughout the whole and throughout the detail, in the leaf as well as in the mass. For things to be supportable to the eye, the subordination must be observed from top to bottom.

'Art does not consist in copying nature servilely. If it did, we should only need to mould our figures on the human body. What the sculptor has to do is to interpret, to seek the vivid lines, and, by means of a detail worked always with regard to the mass, to obtain a living aspect of the mass otherwise impossible.'

In terminating these brief quotations, a word may be added on the apparent incongruity sometimes noticeable in things that Rodin says. At one moment he will speak as though he excluded the ideal from any rôle in true art, assigning the chief place to skill that reproduces nature, nothing but nature. At another, by affirming that nature must not be blindly copied, he opens the door again to the idea or the ideal. The reason of this lies partly in the large abuse of the latter word, an abuse which irritates him. I have heard him say that people who come to him for their bust will not unfrequently ask him to bring out the ideal in their portraiture, and are disappointed when he tells them he intends to reproduce them as they really are.

As a matter of fact, both his insistence on the necessity of the artist's inspiring himself only from his model, and his claim that the modelling itself must be an independent, intelligent building up of what, when complete, will give the most perfect illusion attainable of the individual portrayed, are easily reconcilable, if we remember that, for a man to be an artist, he must possess at once the faculty and the skill. The latter can be acquired by practice, but not unless there is latent faculty to begin with. How this latent faculty was born in Greeks and Gothics and in himself, our teacher does not altogether know, nor we either. An element in its engendering was, perhaps, the cultivation of that study of nature which is his first precept in the gospel of art.

XI

CONCLUSION

IN every domain of man's achievement it appears to be the appanage of greatness to arouse an opposition that never disarms, and grows even with the spread of fame. Like the sea, this opposition has its ebbing tide, but ever and anon returns with rage and strives to break down what has been built up. Against the action of so destructive a force only reputations that are based on solid qualities can stand. The object of this chapter, in recapitulating, is to show how far our sculptor possesses them.

His fame and greatness cannot be denied. Among modern sculptors not one is more universally known, not one has excited more enthusiasm. At the same time, no celebrity has been attacked with keener animus ; and the very things that in the estimation of some constitute his pre-eminence, are by others blamed as defects or worse. We are in presence of an anti-nomy similar to that offered, for instance, by Tolstoi

and Maeterlinck when writing about Shakespeare. The former endeavours to tear our immortal dramatist from the pinnacle to which a world-wide consensus of opinion has raised him, and condemns *King Lear* as a heap of absurdities ; the latter preconizes the same play as the grandest ever produced in any age or nation. Judgments so contradictory must result from tastes, perceptions and canons of criticism that are quite irreconcilable. Certain details may be discussed in them ; but there are things besides which argument does not touch.

Here is a sculptor who treats statuary as being architectural in its essence ; there is another who makes it flexible and elastic. Carried out to their ultimate consequences, these two methods give styles that are totally different, condemnation or approval of which, however upheld, has merely a subjective value. Again, in statuary, as in the novel or the drama, there may be a characterization through strictly individual traits, and another in which these are subordinated to marks of race, epoch, or even idealized humanity. Each treatment may have its relative perfection, and yet fail to find favour with people that are incapable of more than a single worship. Probably, in some future of art, a wider appreciation will be possible among the majority ; and with a few fundamental principles uni-

versally agreed on, as many adaptations of them will be admired as there are men of independent genius to attempt them.

One cause, doubtless, of the extraordinary controversies aroused by Rodin's work is that it does not continuously proceed from the same conception. Some of his statuary is architectural, some is flexible and elastic. Now it is dominated by traits that are individual, now by those that are more general. At one moment the sensuous surges up in his clay in a rush of temperamental passion ; at another, asceticism or high spiritual endeavour are breathed into it by a mood wholly preoccupied with the hidden powers of the soul. And then there is another thing that has to be taken into account. The sculptor has been, all through his career, a searcher, an investigator, never reposing on his laurels, never an imitator of himself, never satisfied with his results, whatever their grandeur. Many, if not all of his pieces, contain an element of experiment. This latter has a merit of its own ; but sometimes the effect aimed at is only partially obtained. Thus, his creations being produced under the sway of clashing activities, adverse criticism is provoked among puzzled or disappointed beholders ; and it not infrequently happens that those who have blessed for a while are ready to curse. 'The man,' they say, 'has



THE THINKER (ROUGH MODEL)

(See pages 68 and 69)

abjured his previous sane performance, and is following a false guide.'

This charge of inconsistency is not justified. Amid each and every of Rodin's variations there is an underlying unity perceptible to those who know and understand him best, that of a science sure of itself and proceeding to a foreseen end by the practice of truths that he has mathematically and logically proved. His heterogeneity of conception, if it be a defect—and his friends regard it rather as a quality—is more than compensated for by a homogeneity of execution. His modelling is Rodinian, not by a trick that superficial artists cultivate just as persons of shoddy aristocracy or culture affect an accent, but by a skill that is incomparable in its kind. In the hands of this craftsman the clay has only to obey. Its subjection is complete; and to so fine a use is it moulded that its texture takes on a fluidity of form, bathed in a sort of aura, that is unique. We look upon the work; and the effect is as if we were listening to a musician inimitable in his playing. In an exhibition we recognize from afar a piece of Rodin's, and go to it, sure of not being deceived. Such mastery over his material, however, might be merely virtuosity, if nothing else were superimposed. But there is more. Meanings are brought out, in pose, gesture, and look, which are

original discoveries, so far as their artistic expression is concerned, since without creative imagination or vision they would remain concealed in the living subject. These significances are always vital, and so distinctive that they stamp themselves indelibly on the memory. One infallible proof of a great sculptural figure is that it abides with us all in its essential contours.

Bourdelle, the most illustrious disciple of an illustrious master and yet with a style differing widely, thus characterizes his elder's execution: 'Rodin is the seer of the movement of lines; he makes precise that which is vague. In his studio, the Tanagras are charmed; they find a Greek potter designing with his soul, and having love at his fingers' ends. Rodin puts the quiver of the vital wave into the smallest parcel of his work; never is a cell of his form inactive. He is the most prodigious mover of clay, marble, bronze, that ever existed. Over and above the gesture of one or another group, the quality of his bodies is vibration; the sublime, human shred thrills beneath his conscious chisel. He works as Pasteur worked; and, like him, has found that nothing is motionless. He hears the soul flower; and the flesh ripens under his hand.'

Certain other accusations made against the sculptor specify a lack of ideal and design, and the intrusion of

too much detail in his work. Unfortunately for the quarrel raised by the first two, there is no universally accepted doctrine as regards either ideal or design. The accusers themselves are not in accord. That Rodin's design is not academic is allowed, but that academic design is superior does not follow; and then the former gives the illusion of natural life and movement, which the latter does not. So much has been said on this point in other parts of the book that it would be useless to dwell further upon it. The only ideal that can be proved to be lacking is one placed in a region foreign to human interest. Rodin's pieces are of intense humanity; and they exhibit this humanity in all its phases passional as well as aspiring; but there is not one of the former that is not presented with such intuition as to carry the spectator into the spirit, cause of the outward manifestation. Therein is its ideality.

The alleged intrusion of detail refers to such things as the bunchiness of muscle in the *Penseur* and the hollows in the flesh of the *Vieille Heaulmière*. Objections on this score appear to be founded on the fact that the Greek statues we are familiar with are modelled as if the body had been covered with a tight-fitting costume serving to veil the minuter details of its structure, whence an academic dogma has been framed that

sculpture should neglect these details and seek rather to fashion the outlines of essential parts. What bad consequences can be drawn is seen by the quantity of smooth statuary produced that is quite false to nature. It is true that the sculptor who simplifies his planes or general surfaces obtains a better chiaroscuro ; and Rodin does this. Such statues as the *Prodigal Son* and the *Eternal Idol* or *Romeo and Juliet* show that he even goes far in the research. But that the simplification of planes is incompatible with a minute delineation of body structure no one has yet proved. Perhaps few artists are capable of succeeding in both and uniting them in one figure. Our sculptor, however, has succeeded, and it is to his credit. To reproach him on the authority of the Greeks is to make the antique—and a small portion of it—an umpire in a matter where effect and intention have alone a right to be heard. And on their testimony he can be defended in his mythology of the *Penseur*. The muscularness of this *Contemplator*, indeed, helps to render him what he is, an epitome of the world's effort gazing with sad perplexity on the results of the expenditure of force throughout the ages. As for the *Vieille Heaulmière*, its best defence is the pathos begotten by sheer dint of faithful modelling, without the least theatricalism. The details are not intrusive but inherent. They are

seek rather the whole statue, and are strictly necessary to the
What b theme treated.

quantity o Is then Rodin absolutely faultless? He would be
to nature the last to assert this, since his motto is excelsior.
s planes In what directions he has not altogether attained he
uro; ~~an~~ probably knows better than his critics; and if I venture
~~1/ Son an~~ to express here certain minor reservations of my own,
t he ~~ew~~ it is because I consider the things they touch as errors
ication of judgment rather than of technique. True, the
of body same things have been deemed by some critics an
v artist extra merit. I would gladly think so too, but can
them ~~is~~ only bring myself to regard them as works of
seeded supererogation.

First, then, Rodin's insistence on points that to him
are of prime importance seems at times to have led him
not only to leave some parts unfinished, which in itself
must not be condemned, but to place in close proximity
and without due transition that which is not finished and
that which is. This is especially manifest in a few of
his later busts, where the smaller range of surface makes
the contrast harsh. In one, it is the hair rising as a
whelming mass of rough marble and overweighting the
face beneath; in another, it is portions of the flesh
in shoulders and bosom that are concealed beneath
patches of raw material; in a third, a quantity of un-
hewn marble thrusts itself on the notice, too consider-

able and too brutal even as a foil. This presence of rough surface background, introduced by many great sculptors, is undoubtedly capable of enhancing artistic effect. In the *Pensée* and *Morla Vicuña* busts, where it is at the base and has a vague resemblance to forms that suit the subject, the enhancement is evident, the means employed discreet. In those incriminated, such delicate subordination is lost ; and, while the workmanship of finished portions is equal in them or even superior, they have not the same total value.

Again, it is difficult to approve on any but fanciful grounds the presentation of a capriciously mutilated statue. One can understand the selection of part of the human body as, for instance, the legs, arms and torso of *L'homme qui marche* ; and yet in the back of this headless walker there is a wide depression where the flesh looks to have been purposely gouged out, which unpleasantly strikes the eye of the beholder. The omission of the head, however, concentrates the attention on the body's movement. But in the *Inner Voice* the arms and front of the knee are broken jaggedly off for no other apparent cause than to make the statue look like the antique ; and an impression of insincerity is created. The mutilation has, of course, been practised for quite a different reason, to wit, the study of contrasts. But the sacrifice is too great. The effect is artificial

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THE DANAID



rather than artistic. In order to produce it, the equipoise of the body is destroyed. A position is given which can only be natural by the addition of the limbs or portion of them that are wanting. If we admire the *Venus of Milo* mutilated, it is because we cannot have the original statue entire. That Rodin should anticipate the ravages of time is an anachronism of a new order.

If I am right in these strictures, and were asked to explain more fully how a man of such profound knowledge in his craft should be found tripping, I would suggest that the consummate artist may derive a keen pleasure, which the spectator cannot share, in opposing his unwrought material to what he has produced from it, and to him the finished work might mean less if there were nothing remaining to remind him of its inception. However this be, the blemishes are small ; they do not appear in the bulk of our sculptor's creation, and they in no wise affect those qualities which give it durability.

Over and above the execution, but also because of it and through it, his statuary is permanently interesting, with an attraction for lovers of art similar to that which makes some books to be read by one generation after another. They may not always be able to analyse the attraction any more than the colour or

scent of a flower, realizing only that their æsthetic sense is entertained. This, then, is an embracing quality. The others but indicate, when known, why the interest is there.

One of them has to do with the already noticed subtlety of Rodin's observation, surprising and minutely registering attitudes and gestures that are not formal and put on for the occasion, but intimate and psychological. Ordinary artists either do not see these or cannot record them. Almost any one can draw or model a rudimentary face or figure. When the work is done by an inexperienced amateur, we have a sort of general type, but nothing individual about it, nothing to retain the attention. We smile at it as at a child's efforts and pass it by. Skill can do more. It can render the features more like, the body more anatomic, give a certain personal semblance. But for the painted or modelled flesh to have its own life and movement, for characteristic attributes to be revealed, for the soul in its peculiarities to shine out, this needs genius if the portraiture is to have its maximum truth. Some masters of the chisel attain this difficult success in their busts who fail or fall short in portraying the rest of the body. To such *L'homme qui marche* is a lesson. Although headless, he might be deciphered with almost as much detail as if the head were there. The

museum at Meudon has other examples as convincing. Here is a small figure of a satyr bending down into a vase and excitedly seeking with his hand to lay hold of something at the bottom.¹ Face and head are hidden. Yet the whole is modelled with such a quiver of curiosity in the silhouettes of torso, croup, and hairy legs that one is stirred to laughing sympathy.

A second quality of permanent interest in our sculptor's production is its range, which is more than variety. A large number of musical airs can be played in one key. Rodin carves his statues in all the keys, major and minor, flats and sharps, and naturals. Emotions of every sort are embodied, both those which are simple and those which are complex, those in which elemental nature is most present and those in which the pains are felt that purify. The elemental is treated with a delicate avoidance of anything that is gross ; but, as there are people who read obscenity into whatsoever treatment of sex relations is not thickly veiled, this phase of his execution has often brought him into odium—an odium quite undeserved, since that which his imagination gives us is not form *per se*, but ideas and mental states incarnate

¹ See, in my larger *Life of Rodin*, the story concerning this piece.

in form. The fact is perhaps more easily recognizable in such pieces as the *Hand of God*, the *Soul and Body*, the *Prodigal Son*, but it is just as existent in the *Eternal Idol*, *Francesca and Paolo*, and those that represent themes of similar import. Potentially only it is true, since they are not completed, Rodin's two *magna opera* of themselves illustrate the whole of his range with its vast dimensions, the *Hell Gate* dealing chiefly with minor modes and the *Tower of Labour* with major.

A third quality inherent in each of his spontaneous pieces is the power to awaken associations in the beholder that ripple out, like the circles in water that a stone has struck, and quicken memories. Ordinary statuary rarely does this. More often it leaves us cold and unresponsive. No doubt the difference is largely due to our artist's continual study of nature, so that, when he copies, he catches and transfers the suggestiveness belonging to the original. But there is also his selection and composition—a real creation—which always calls us back from convention and life's shell of circumstance, and replaces us in contact with fountain sources that remain eternally fresh.

And, lastly, he finds everything beautiful which is natural. He believes, too, with Keats that 'a thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' And, as his artist-power

is equal to his vision, it is not astonishing that both the beauty of everything and his joy in that beauty should be reflected in his figures.

The task of comparing Rodin with his contemporaries separately cannot be definitively performed while he and they are alive, especially as some of the younger ones, who go their own way, display talent from which great things may be expected. Of those that are or were about his equals in age, very few are likely to have more than ephemeral fame. Exception made for Dalou and two or three others, their sculpture, when it is not superficial, is generally spoilt by affectation ; of real essential humanity it contains but little. In recent monumental statuary this is painfully evident. During the last ten years we have had, for instance, the *Victor Hugo* of Barrias, the *Balzac* of Falguière, the *Musset* and *Gounod* of Mercié. The first is pompous and theatrical, the second merely commonplace, the third and fourth namby-pambily sentimental. Here and there we find something of nobler inspiration, like Bartholomé's group in Père Lachaise ; but then the execution does not support the conception, and the effect is marred.

In fine, whatever may be the net acquisition of the very considerable efforts at present being made by Rodin's juniors who are in their prime, they can

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hardly deprive him of the unique position which he holds, the place apart which he has earned as an initiator and discoverer, and as one of the most perfect craftsmen in an art wherein not many excel.

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